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NELLY ARMSTRONG.

VOL. I.

NELLY ARMSTRONG:

A STORY OF THE DAY.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "ROSE DOUGLAS."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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NELLY ARMSTRONG.

CHAPTER I.

“AND oh! Nelly, lassie, dinna forget us in that great town.”

“Do you think I could, mother?” said the weeping girl.

“And mind to say your prayers night and morning, and to read your Bible, Nelly. And be dutiful to your mistress,—you ken what the apostle says, ‘with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men.’ We’ve let you hae your ain way about this, Nelly, though your father and I wad hae liked better if you had

ta'en a place nearer to hame; sae dinna let us hae cause to rue it."

"Oh, mother, I'm sae sorry now that the time's come; I wish I had never thocht o' a service there."

"It's ower late now, Nelly, to change your mind," said the mother with a quivering lip, "and there's the same God in Edinburgh as in Winstraelea. He'll no forget ye, my bairn, if ye put your trust in Him.

The young girl's only answer was her sobs.

"And Nelly, dinna you be ower fond o' making acquaintances in the toun. You're a young, light-hearted thing, and ken little o' the evil ways o' the warld; it would break my heart Nelly, if ye were to gang wrang,"

As the mother spoke, her hands busied themselves nervously and half unconsciously, in arranging the folds of her daughter's shawl.

"And Nelly, though I've sometimes found faut wi' ye for no being sae douce and steady as I would hae wished, it was a' for your gude,

my bairn ; I wouldna like ye to think I was hard on ye—such a young thing as you are—especially now that you're gaun to leave us."

" Oh ! mother, you never were hard on me ; but I ken I hae mony a time vext you wi' my thoughtlessness, and this makes me the sorrier to part wi' ye. I'll mind a' ye say to me, mother—'deed will I."

" Weel, that's a comfort, and we ken you're gaun to a gude place, and I hope Miss Archer will find that ye dinna disgrace the character she has given ye. We maun e'en do the best we can without ye, Nelly."

" Tell Miss Archer, mother, that I'll never forget her kindness, nor the master's either."

Nelly now turned to her father, who had remained silent during the past conversation, though the workings of his countenance showed he was an attentive listener to it.

" Father, dear," she said, in a tremulous voice, laying her hand affectionately on his

shoulder; "ye'll aye mind Nelly at worship time."

"Ye needna doubt that, Nelly," said the old man, hastily drawing his hand across his eyes; "and dinna forget, Nelly, that we didna grudge the money for your schooling, sae be na sweert to write to us—a letter coming nows and thans will be a great comfort to your mother and me."

"I'll write every week, father."

"That would be ower often,—we couldna expect that frae ye; but let it be every other week. But it's time you were off, Nelly," glancing up at the Dutch clock, which was fastened to the wall; "the coach is seldom later o' passing the end o' the loan than ten o'clock, and it's close on the half hour now. Jamie will be there already wi' the things. Bid your mother fareweel then, my lassie, and let us awa."

"Fareweel then, mother;" and the weeping girl threw her arms around her mother's neck,

and kissed her affectionately. The latter could not speak, her heart was too full; but she earnestly returned her daughter's embrace, and Nelly, without venturing a look behind, hastily accompanied her father from the cottage. The mother followed and gazed wistfully after them up the narrow lane that led to the public road. Once she made some hasty steps forward, as if to overtake them, perhaps to exchange a few more farewell words; but Nelly, who was walking rapidly on with her handkerchief at her eyes, was not aware of the movement, and the mother slowly returned to the cottage door.

She was still standing there when the father and daughter reached a spot where the lane branched off in a different direction. Nelly turned here to take a last look of her home. She waved her handkerchief to her mother, and then hurried forward, as if afraid of her own resolution; and as the last flutter of her daughter's shawl round the corner caught her

eye, the mother hastily retreated into her cottage, and closed the door.

“When and how will we meet again!” she thought; “O Lord, watch over my Nelly!”

The father and daughter proceeded silently on their way. They reached the highway just as the coach came in sight. In less than five minutes she was seated on its top, her box was lifted up—the coach whirled off towards its distant destination—and Nelly, with a sinking heart and streaming eyes, soon lost sight of the figures of her father and brother, as they gazed earnestly and dejectedly after her.

“Bonnie Nelly Armstrong,” as she was called in her native village, was, though innocent and guileless, somewhat of a rustic coquette. Her bright eyes, rosy cheeks, and sprightly manners had already procured her many admirers, though she was only eighteen. But she was content to leave them all, for the sake of a situation in the distant metro-

polis. She had never seen a city, and she eagerly desired to do so.

An opportunity had occurred for gratifying her curiosity. It was sorely against her parents' will that she embraced it. But though of an affectionate disposition, she was rather self-willed and they were too yielding. They had not sufficient resolution to persist in refusing what she had so evidently set her heart upon, and she at last wrung from them a reluctant consent.

The parents' principal objections to her going to town were its distance from home, and because they had no friends there who might watch over her interests. They hoped, however, that she would be satisfied with a brief experience of a town life, and would then return to them; and somewhat re-assured by her promises on this point, they at length consented that she should accept the situation in question—which was indeed an excellent one.

Thomas Armstrong was "grieve"—an humble kind of overseer—at a neighbouring colliery. It was his duty every morning to descend first into the pit, and ascertain its safety before the men commenced their work. It was an employment attended with some risk ; but Thomas's prudence and sobriety rendered it comparatively safe. No serious accident had occurred at the colliery since his appointment to this office. He was a man held in high esteem by the superintendent, Mr. Archer, and indeed by the whole neighbourhood, being considered an exception to most of the colliers by his piety, steadiness, and general intelligence. He was, however, a person of few words and unpretending manners.

His wife was even a greater favourite with the public than he. She was of a quiet and tender spirit, an excellent wife and mother. She was also an intelligent and thoughtful woman, superior in many respects to those of

her own class. The neighbourhood in which she lived was noted for its evil-speaking and gossiping, but Mrs. Armstrong was never heard to censure her neighbours. Perhaps this was the reason of her popularity among them, for her mental superiority was more apt to create enemies than friends. Some did occasionally sneer at her appearance and ways, which were a silent reflection upon theirs; but even they were ready to acknowledge her willingness to oblige, and the uprightness of her walk and conversation.

By birth she was a Scotchwoman; but she was of English extraction, her parents having removed to Scotland soon after their marriage. She had both the accent and idiom of the latter country. Her English blood accounted to the people of Winstrælea for what they called her “ower great niceness and fykiness.” Her female neighbours were slatterns during the week, though they flaunted in all the colours of the rainbow at the kirk on Sundays, while

Mrs. Armstrong, though testifying her reverence for that day by her apparel, was at no time dirty and disorderly in her dress. Her house too was always "redd up," which they could not account for, as she did not seem to work so hard as they did.

"Hoo do ye manage to hae your house aye sae clean, Mrs. Armstrong?" said one day to her a lazy, gossipping neighbour, who found her in the forenoon seated at some needle-work in her bright little dwelling.

"I never let it get dirty, Annie, and I time my turns," was the answer. And she proved her assertion by effacing the marks which her visitor's naked feet had made on her nicely whitened floor, whenever she took her departure.

Her management was the more wonderful to her neighbours, that her health was not robust. She was of a feeble and dwining constitution—always ailing. Yet Nelly, when a child, was never kept from school to assist her. They

could not understand, far less practise it; so though they acknowledged Mrs. Armstrong's good qualities, they all agreed that she had "far ower muckle o' the leddy about her, which, however, wasna to be wondered at, as she was English."

She, on the other hand, though fully alive to their faults, was too prudent to seem so. She knew how distasteful such a suspicion would be to them; and she desired nothing more than to live in peace with all men. So, though always ready to give advice or assistance when it was asked, she never obtruded them upon her neighbours. Therefore she was able to live on good terms with all.

Fortunately, Thomas's house stood somewhat apart from the long row of cottages occupied by his brother colliers. The Colliers' Row, as it was called, was somewhat disorderly and idle in its habits. It kept late hours and eschewed sobriety. Its external neatness was in proportion to its internal. There was generally a

cluster of dirty half-ragged children and gossiping mothers in front of the doors, the children playing among the dust and mud of the road, in constant danger of being run over by passing vehicles ; the mothers dandling babies in their arms, talking over their neighbours' affairs and neglecting their own.

Few of the colliers' wives were good managers. There were generally waste one day, want the next, in the cottages of the Row. Many of the men were also intemperate. They had in general good wages ; but, alas ! the money that should have been spent on necessities was too often expended on whiskey.

Many a sad scene the Row witnessed on Saturday nights. Drunken men, scolding and sometimes crying women, who could not obtain sufficient money from their husbands, (who had just received their week's wages), to purchase food for the family—squalling children, cursed by their tipsy father and cuffed by their mother to quiet them, and of course without the desired

effect—idle girls trifling away their time at the corners of the Row with their own female companions or the young men of the place—all the dirt, confusion, and idleness of the village during the week multiplied tenfold.

What a contrast to this did Thomas Armstrong's house and family afford! All was comfort and propriety there. His wife's frugality and management were in proportion to her tidiness. Homely plenty was always to be found on his board; and, as Thomas had reminded his daughter, they had cheerfully paid for their children's education. Nelly and a son, four years younger, were their only offspring. It was a bad neighbourhood for young people, but the parents could not help themselves. They were, however, anxious to remove Nelly from its influence, and hoped to see her settled as a servant in some gentleman's family within an easy distance.

A light heart and great liveliness of disposition united to a tolerable consciousness of her

good looks, made the careful mother somewhat apprehensive for Nelly. She feared to expose her to temptation, and was therefore rejoiced when, about a year before our story opens, she was engaged as a household servant by the sister of the gentleman who superintended the extensive collieries belonging to a great coal proprietor in that part of the country.

Miss Archer was well acquainted with both Nelly and her parents, and highly esteemed the family. She would have dreaded to admit any other girl from that too justly stigmatized place, the Colliers' Row, into her sober household. But Nelly, though lively and coquettish in manner, was, she knew, a simple-hearted, innocent girl, who probably required only time and experience to render her sedate and steady. Miss Archer too was very tolerant of youthful foibles, and Nelly's good-humour, neatness, and obliging disposition made her a favourite with the good spinster.

Miss Archer and her brother were twins.

They resembled, and were strongly attached to each other. Both were tinged with a little harmless eccentricity, which made them the butts of all the small wits in the neighbourhood. "Brother," and "sister," as in quaint old-fashioned style they called each other, were of the excellent of the earth. Mr. Archer was a man of some talent and learning, and if ever there was a soul filled with the genuine milk of human kindness in this world, it was that of his sister Miss Nancy Archer.

A tall, military-looking woman—if one may use such a term in regard to a female—whose stiff angular figure seemed as if it could not bend, and who looked her brother in petticoats, with a grim aspect, having something more than a mere suspicion of down round the chin and mouth, and wearing a dress whose glaring bad taste and ill-fit were still more singular than the figure—conveyed anything but feminine ideas to the mind. And yet most feminine poor Miss Nancy was.

She was even a coward—had a great terror of housebreakers and dogs, and had been known to make a circuit of two miles rather than venture to pass a quiet inoffensive cow feeding by the roadside. Nature had made a sad blunder, when she had adapted so rough and masculine an exterior to so timid and fearful a soul. Miss Nancy was the dupe of every artful beggar in the district, whose tales of suffering would often deprive her of her night's rest, while ruminating upon plans for relieving them; and yet she possessed considerable shrewdness of character. But her own nature was so simple and truthful, that she never could suspect falsehood in others.

Nelly's conduct proved satisfactory to her easy, warm-hearted mistress. Her mother's training had made her an active, tidy servant. Old Betty, the other domestic of the family, grumbled a little, it is true, about her vanity and giddiness; but it was always before her

face, not in her absence, showing that Nelly's unfailing good-humour had softened even her, who was considered a perfect dragon by all the youth of the neighbourhood. Nelly however thought it hard that Betty should keep so strict a watch over her actions and that she dared not admit any of her admirers into the kitchen of an evening. They were respectable young men—not from the Colliers' Row; for Nelly, though a collier's daughter, turned up her little nose in dignified disdain at all from that quarter, which rendered her no favourite there with either sex—but farm servants from the adjacent country. She indemnified herself however by stealing out almost every night to have a flirtation with some of them over the garden-hedge which skirted a public foot-path, though certain of being scolded when she returned.

The house occupied by the Archers was in the neighbourhood of the principal colliery. It stood a little off the public road, and half a

mile distant from the Row. It was of such size, that some years after it was built, the proprietor considered it advisable to divide it into floors. Each floor was capable of containing a small family. Mr. Archer lived in the upper one which had a separate entrance, and to which the garden belonged. There was, however, only one approach to both dwellings, and the families were brought into hourly contact.

A half-pay lieutenant, but who by courtesy was termed a captain at Winstraelea, with his wife and large family, came to inhabit the ground-floor at the same time that Nelly entered her situation. They had formerly lived in Edinburgh, but motives of economy had compelled them to retire to some cheap country place. They found Winstraelea very dull. They were too poor to be visited by the gentry of the neighbourhood, and therefore ran some risk of having no society at all; the clergyman, the parish doctor, and the

Archers forming the entire middle class of the place. The Archers, however, with their usual kindness were ready to pay them every attention.

These were not exactly the people they would have preferred for such near neighbours; but they had no choice in the matter, and so the worthy souls determined to make the best of it. But the reality proved worse than the anticipation.

Mrs. McMurdo was too fine a lady for her income, and was utterly incapable of managing a family. She had received no practical education when young; and before, and for some years after her marriage had lived amongst a gay, dashing, and thoughtless set.

"She was nae better than a bairn," said Betty, who read the characters of the newly-arrived family in a day's time; "and the Captain wi' his muckle black whiskers and red nose, was liker to a vagabond than a sodger."

Betty from the first conceived a dislike to them, which never lessened ; and ere long she was in open warfare with the whole establishment. The Captain, who feared her tongue, kept carefully out of her way ; but neither Mrs. McMurdo nor her poor maid of all work could escape. The latter, especially, was always committing some high misdemeanour according to Betty's notions, encroaching upon her "places," and leaving those which both families had in common in an unpardonable state of filth. The girl was a poor thoughtless drudge, over-worked and ill-fed, and ere long she trembled at the mere sight of Betty ; while her mistress, arrogant as well as indolent, was kept in a constant flutter of indignation by what she called "the strange impertinence of the old wretch."

Ere the family had been a week settled in their new home, Miss Archer began to be harassed by constant messages of complaint regarding her servant's conduct, from Mrs.

McMurdo. They were most unwillingly conveyed by Janet the maid, who dreaded encountering Betty while discharging this duty, naturally reasoning that the knowledge of her errand would draw down a torrent of wrath from that person upon her devoted head. She would have deceived her mistress—being rather an adept in such arts—and spent the necessary time for the delivery of the message in the coal-cellar. But was there not a window which commanded a view of Mr. Archer's outer staircase, and watchful eyes might be lurking there—she dared not venture it.

Those messages, of which at length she lived in hourly dread, altogether destroyed Miss Archer's peace of mind. Their former neighbour was a paralytic old gentleman, who might have been dead and buried for years before he really paid the debt of nature, for all that they saw or heard of him. Things were sadly altered now.

Miss Archer was in a painful dilemma. She

knew not what to do to reconcile these differences. Betty was an old and faithful servant, and greatly privileged, besides her mistress stood a little in awe of her, and feared to remonstrate.

Then the children were a great source of distress to Miss Archer's feeling nature. There were nine of them—where they were stowed at night puzzled the good spinster, who knew the capabilities of the house—and they were suffered to run about entirely unattended, while their mother lay indolently on the sofa in the dusty sitting-room, reading novels, of which works she procured a regular supply by coach. Of course they were constantly falling into scrapes and meeting with accidents. One of the girls had her arm broken before they came to Winstraelea, and it had been so ill set that the poor thing could not bend it; another's eye was fatally injured.

Miss Archer felt great compassion for these neglected children; but they kept her in con-

stant uneasiness. They were more than half-wild from want of restraint, and if she invited them into the house, which she often did for the purpose of supplying them with food, which they sometimes had a difficulty in obtaining at home, she had to watch them vigilantly, for fear in some of their mischievous gambols, they might injure either themselves or her. They were always playing pranks on Betty too, whose dislike of their ways they heartily returned; and so persevering were they in this respect, and so startling were many of their tricks, that Betty's dread of them soon equalled her wrath.

"It was lamentable," she declared, "to see bairns sae possest wi' the spirit o' Satan—she couldna hae believed it o' them, if she hadna seen't. There they were rinnin about frae morning till night—and aye, in the places whaur they had nae business to be—no a bonnet on ane o' their heads, or a decent shoe on their feet, and their souls just left to take

care o' themselfs. If that muckle senseless tawpie the mither, wha wore her best gown every day, till it was fitter for a tatie-bogle's back than a leddy's—set her up for a leddy! —wad mak their claise and darn their stockings, instead o' lying a' her time on the sofa reading a wheen prented lees, it wad be telling her. And if that lazy loon the father—a bonnie like sodger he wad make if the country needed him, his fechtin', she trowed, wad be a' ahint a stane wa—wad learn his bairns, puir ill-guided things, their spelling and their carritch, instead o' daundering about the doors the haill morning smoking—it was like to scomfish folk—and drinking whiskey toddy a' the afternoon, he wad be mair respected."

Now Betty was not particular as to the time and manner in which she uttered such remarks as the foregoing. Indeed, she seemed to prefer those seasons when there was a probability that the individuals to whom she alluded, might have the benefit of overhearing

them. So ere long the warfare between the rival establishments, which had at first been in a smouldering state, manifesting only occasional flashes of heat, burst into open and unextinguishable flame. Mrs. McMurdo finding that her complaints to the mistress did not produce the effect she expected, turned her resentment upon that quarter as aiding and abetting the culprit—Mrs. McMurdo *cut* Miss Archer.

It was no great misfortune, yet poor Miss Archer felt it severely. She was quite dejected and miserable for some time, and had all the consciousness of criminality, scarcely daring to venture out of doors, for fear she might meet the incensed Mrs. or Captain McMurdo. The latter, she had no doubt, shared his wife's resentment, and the anger of such a black-whiskered, martial-visaged man, she was terribly afraid of encountering. So she carefully watched the Captain's goings and comings—there was not much chance of meeting his

lady—stealing out like a thief to visit the poor, who loved and respected her notwithstanding her oddities, and making her way home over fields and through hedges, for fear she might stumble upon him in the public road.

“You see, brother,” she said with great feeling to Mr. Archer, “it would be very painful to me to pass the Captain without speaking to him. He might expect me to apologize—and I don’t think—I really don’t think, brother, I should have courage even to do that.”

“Apologize for what, sister?” asked Mr. Archer, who was rather in the dark. But this, Miss Archer could not explain satisfactorily—her own ideas on the subject being somewhat confused. However, she believed she must have behaved ill in some way or other, since Mrs. McMurdo thought so.

It was very hard on poor Miss Archer; for she had done her best to heal the strife,

and she had been the greatest sufferer from it. She had borne all the late annoyances with the greatest meekness, and had more than once summoned courage to say to Betty—and it was an exertion of courage for her.

“Now, now, Betty—there’s a good creature—don’t say anything more about the Captain, or Mrs. McMurdo, or their children, and servant, Betty—or at least, Betty, don’t speak quite so loud!”

“No speak my mind, Miss Archer,” (in a loud key), “atweel I’ll hide my opinion for naeboddy, and I carena though the haill warld heard me. The Captain,” (louder still,) “set him up for a Captain!—a puir half-pay lieutenant, for didna I see ane o’ his letters ae morning, and sorra a Captain there was on’t; and as to Madam,” (here Betty raised her voice to screaming pitch, to Miss Archer’s great horror), “I trow if she wad wash her floors and brush her rooms, it wadna misbecome her dignity. A set o’ puir shabby

trash—and to think o' closing my mouth—but as sure's my name's Betty Parlane, I'll let them hear the truth for aince."

And they certainly *did* hear it, as an immediate message from Mrs. McMurdo proved.

So disagreeable grew, at length, the close proximity of this family to the Archers, that they would willingly have left the house to which an occupancy of some years had attached them, if another could have been found to suit them. But Mr. Archer required to live in the neighbourhood of the colliery, and this was the only one within a reasonable distance.

The Captain, to do him justice, was civil enough; and, notwithstanding Miss Archer's apprehensions, showed no desire to espouse his wife's quarrels. Although she refused all intercourse with their neighbours up-stairs, he was very glad to drop in during the day at Mr. Archer's office, or to sit with him in the evening. This was a grievous infliction to the latter, for he was a reading man, and the Captain was

—an idle one. He liked a newspaper, or a stray number of *Punch* when he could get hold of it, but he seldom troubled himself with anything deeper. Moreover, the Captain was a great admirer of spirits and water, while Mr. Archer was a man of extreme temperance. However, they contrived to get on pretty well together, though Mr. Archer would sometimes sigh deeply when he thought of his former neighbour, poor paralytic Mr. Gibson, whom he saw just when it suited himself; and it grieved his heart to have his favourite flower-beds in the garden trodden down by children's feet—the said children having no privilege to enter there. But as Betty said: “they wad hae speeled ower a sax feet wa’ rather than an apple or a flower should be keepit frae them.” Mr. Archer, however, was a meek man and disliked to expostulate.

Nelly had her share of these discomforts like her neighbours. She detested the Captain, who had once taken the liberty of chucking her

under the chin and complimenting her on her looks, for though not averse to hearing her beauty praised, she considered it an act of assurance on his part ; and she disliked Mrs. McMurdo for her airs and pretensions, and for the trouble which that lady's neglect of her family occasioned to her neighbour. The only one of the establishment Nelly favoured was Janet. She pitied her, and found great pleasure in gossiping with her in the court, which unfortunately for Miss Archer, (for it was there the quarrels first commenced,) was common to both families. Her condescension drew down upon her many a taunt from Betty, who declared "it was a disgrace for a decent servant to be seen talking to such a draggle-tailed hizzie." But Nelly continued steady in her friendship.

It was from her gossipings with this girl, that Nelly's desire to go to Edinburgh dated. Janet was a native of that city, and deeply regretted having been wiled away from it by the deceitful representations and promises of

of Mrs. M^cMurdo. Country service she found odious—her present situation particularly so. She was a bad specimen of her class—being versed in all the petty tricks and low cunning peculiar to some members of it. Indeed, she was thoroughly unprincipled. But in Mrs. M^cMurdo's household, there was little opportunity for the exercise of her abilities, and even Betty considered her no better than a mere stupid drudge. Her knowledge of town gave her great importance with Nelly, of which she had the shrewdness to avail herself—her smart country neighbour having some influence in the place. She accordingly taxed her imagination to draw as glowing and inviting pictures as possible of town. She did not want invention, and the simple country girl was dazzled by her descriptions. Nelly's uneventful village life seemed dullness itself by contrast, and she regarded Janet with envy when that young woman declared her fixed intention of returning

to Edinburgh whenever her present engagement expired.

When that period arrived, Janet, as she had threatened, availed herself of it, and left her situation to her successor in misery. She took a cordial farewell of Nelly, an indifferent one of all else, and departed, regretted by no one but the former, who saw many good qualities in her and knew nothing of her faults.

Nine months experience, at length effectually disgusted Nelly with her situation. She loved her master and mistress, and would have done anything to oblige them, but she was tired with the proximity to their troublesome neighbours, (who found the place too cheap in all respects to care to leave it,) and with Betty's temper. Even Nelly's good nature could not sustain the constant attacks of the latter's tongue, exasperated as that member had become by its daily skirmishing with Janet and Mrs. M^cMurdo; and greatly to her mother's regret,

she announced to her her firm intention of leaving her situation at the ensuing term.

Nelly was not ingenuous here. She did not consider it prudent at first to confess to her parents her eager wish to go to town, or to mention to them that she knew Miss Archer had been requested by a friend in Edinburgh to procure a country servant for her. She had overheard her mistress inform Betty of this, and consult her as to the probability of finding a respectable young woman in the neighbourhood, who might be willing to go to town, and this had finally decided Nelly on leaving her present situation. Miss Archer, she knew, would have some difficulty in procuring a suitable person, and she hoped ere that was overcome to prevail on her parents to consent to her wishes.

As I formerly mentioned, she did not easily obtain this. But Nelly had been always somewhat of a spoiled child—Thomas Armstrong

and his sensible wife *had* their weaknesses—and eventually she succeeded. But though their affection for their daughter induced them to gratify her, they did not the less see the imprudence of the step, or cease to regret it. The mother especially took it much to heart, but Nelly in the first triumph of success, was not sensible of this.

Armed with her parent's reluctant consent, Nelly, though with some timidity, informed Miss Archer of her intention to quit her service, and proffered herself as a candidate for the town situation. That lady was surprised, and not a little disappointed, for Nelly, as I have said, was a favourite; but she was too generous to remonstrate. No objection could be made to the girl's qualifications: so Miss Archer wrote to her friend, Mrs. Elliot, and recommended her own servant. She was of course engaged by the lady, and for some time Nelly felt at the height of happiness.

When the time, however, for entering on her new engagement drew near, her spirits drooped. Her mother's anxious face, and her father's grave looks were constant reproaches to her, and if she could have recalled the past she would have done so. But as her mother said, it was now too late,—the situation had been accepted. Besides Mrs. Armstrong felt certain that the parting once over, Nelly's spirits would rapidly recover their usual elasticity.

Miss Archer kindly permitted her to leave her service a week earlier than is customary, that she might spend some time with her parents, before parting with them for so long a period ; and it was a time of almost ceaseless regret and lamentation with Nelly—her father and mother who had opposed the step, now requiring to encourage and console her under it. And when the hour of parting arrived, and she saw her native place disappear from her view, as she sat weeping on the top of the coach

that was bearing her away to the distant fairy-land of her imagination, it is no exaggeration to say that Nelly Armstrong felt for the time utterly miserable.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. ELLIOT, Nelly's new mistress, was a widow. Her husband had been a man of family and property in Perthshire; but unfortunately, his estate was strictly entailed. Some years had elapsed since his death, and during those she had resided with her daughter in Edinburgh, their former residence in the country being let on lease. The estate though considerable, was encumbered; but Mrs. Elliot's step-son—for she was her husband's second wife—to whom it devolved, was fortunate enough soon after his father's death, to procure a

lucrative appointment in India, to which he departed, leaving his inheritance to be nursed in his absence.

He had all the affection of a son for Mrs. Elliot, who had fully supplied his mother's place to him, and a brother's pride in his sweet, gentle little sister. She, however, was still almost a child when he left the country. But his letters and miniature preserved his image in her mind.

His sudden death six months before Nelly's arrival in town, had plunged them into mourning, at a time too when they had begun to anticipate with some certainty the period when he would be able to return home, and when they would all settle again at Craiglee. He died unmarried, and the estate, now almost disencumbered, passed to a remote branch of the family, with whom Mrs. Elliot and her daughter had no acquaintance. "Sweet Craiglee," could never now be their home, as Mary Elliot had fondly dreamed, and her sorrow for

her brother's death, was mingled with painful regret at this final separation from the spot to which her heart had never ceased to cling.

Her step-son's death made a serious alteration in Mrs. Elliot's circumstances. Her jointure was small, and Mary had little or no fortune, The emoluments belonging to Mr. Elliot's appointment were liberal, and he added largely to his step-mother's income. This generosity, and the expenses to which his position in India exposed him, prevented him from realizing any fortune there. He looked forward to enjoying a handsome income from his estate in the future ; and being still young, and having no experience of bad health, had never contemplated the possibility of being suddenly called to leave the world.

Mrs. Elliot was a true Christian. She felt severely the change in their circumstances for her daughter's sake—her own jointure of course died with her ; but she knew that all things are wisely appointed by God, therefore

without murmuring and fretting, she calmly proceeded to retrench her establishment so as to suit their altered fortunes. Fortunately, she had not yet engaged her house for the ensuing year, so in due time she announced to the proprietor her intention of quitting it, and procured one of smaller size and lower rent in the neighbourhood of Stockbridge. She also dismissed her servants, with the exception of an elderly woman, who had been in her service many years, and whom she esteemed for her steadiness and piety. Martha, however, she was aware, was of a peculiar temper, and it was necessary to find her a fellow-servant who would accommodate herself to it. Such a one Mrs. Elliot thought would be more likely found in the country, so she wrote to her friend Miss Archer, who when formerly residing in Edinburgh, she had often met in her visits among the poor, requesting her to procure a servant for her on whose docility and respectability she could rely.

We have already described the effect of the letter.

Mary Elliot had been too gently and delicately nurtured to be insensible to the change in her position ; but the mother, who had piously trained her, had the satisfaction of finding that when the first shock was over, her mind rose superior to it. She not only looked forward calmly to the future, but she endeavoured to support her mother's spirits by redoubled cheerfulness and assiduity. Their friends, too, hastened to gather round them at this trying time. A few, of course, proved themselves summer ones, forsaking their friends when prosperity forsook them ; but those were the exceptions, for Mrs. Elliot's quiet way of life had afforded little temptation to the gay and worldly to seek her acquaintance.

They had been settled for a few days in their new home, a small but neat house in Danube Street, to which they had got entrance

earlier than usual, when Nelly made her appearance.

Those days had been busy ones. The ladies had many things to do with their own hands which formerly had been entrusted to servants; and who does not know the trouble, confusion, and fatigue consequent upon a change of residence? When inexperience has to contend with these, matters are very bad indeed. But with patience and management, order was at length brought out of the chaos, and both Mrs. Elliot and her daughter felt as if the exertion had done them good. They had of course made many blunders, but these had been all quietly rectified by their methodical old servant, who was grieved to see her ladies performing household work, and would have expostulated, but they would not listen to her. The assistants were at length got rid of; mother, and daughter, and servant made a satisfactory progress through the rooms, con-

gratulating themselves on the *home* look they now wore, and enjoying the sweets of leisure after toil and bustle. Mary had had no walk for some days, so as they expected Nelly to arrive that afternoon, she proposed to go herself to the coach-office and conduct her home.

"I hope, Miss Elliot," said Martha, as she opened the street-door for her young mistress, "that she will be a smart and orderly girl as well as a staid one, to save you trouble."

"I hope so too, Martha," said Mary cheerfully, "though it is more for your sake than mine."

"God bless her!" murmured the old servant to herself, as she gazed earnestly after the young lady; "and He has blest her, for surely no one could have stood such a change without His grace. But I must see to get the tea ready by the time she is back." And she hastened in.

We must now return to Nelly, whom we left when setting forward on her journey to town. It was long before her tears ceased to flow, but at length the consciousness that her fellow-travellers were observing her had the effect of arresting them. Then the strange sensation of being borne rapidly along—at least as rapidly as four good horses could drag the coach—the novelty of the scenes through which she passed, the clear bracing air, all tended to revive her spirits, and Nelly's little heart at last forgot its recent anguish in the unwonted excitement of travelling. Still a deep sigh, like that which heaves the breast of a child long after its tears are dried, would occasionally escape her. Some recollection of the quiet cottage at home—quieter than usual this day—had then recurred to her, and the tears rose again to her bright eyes, though they were not permitted to overflow them. But notwithstanding such reminders, her mind was gradually regaining

its old tone, under the magical influence of novelty.

They were seven hours in reaching their destination, and Nelly's spirits had again begun to flag under the fatigue of so long and unusual a journey ; but their near approach to Edinburgh revived them. She gazed around her with awe-struck curiosity as they entered the suburbs, and drove on between rows of handsome houses. And when they suddenly wheeled into Princes Street, and she saw the long line of that fine terrace stretched before her, terminated by the gleaming pillars of the Calton Hill, while the grey old castle on its rock, and the quaint and picturesque masses of the Old Town towered on her right hand, she could not restrain an exclamation of delighted astonishment. This was indeed worth travelling to see, and Janet had not exaggerated.

On they rattled past gay shops and passengers, and in a few minutes had arrived at

the coach office. Her fellow-travellers immediately descended; but Nelly sat still, gazing more than half bewildered on the buildings and crowd, forgetting that she also ought to descend, and that a person was to be waiting for her.

“Now then,” cried the guard, when all the other passengers had reached the pavement, “do you mean to sit here the whole night, my lass?” and Nelly found herself half assisted, half lifted from the coach; her box followed, and a young lady dressed in deep mourning, who had been sitting for some time in a neighbouring shop, stepping forward, inquired with a gentle voice and sweet smile if her name were Nelly Armstrong.

Nelly gladly answered in the affirmative. The young lady desired a porter who was in attendance to take the box, and they were speedily threading their way through the crowd collected around the coach-office.

Nelly carefully followed the young lady along

the street, half frightened by the noise and bustle, and yet casting many an inquisitive look around her. Miss Elliot did not forget the girl was a stranger, and walked slowly for fear she might get bewildered. On this account she also soon left the crowded thoroughfare, and having passed through St. Andrew's Square, turned in the direction of Stockbridge. As they were descending the hill, Miss Elliot kindly entered into conversation with Nelly. The latter was fluttered and nervous, nevertheless, the young lady was much pleased with the simplicity and yet spirit of her remarks. She thought too that she had seldom seen a more attractive countenance than the young girl's, from its freshness, good-humour, and air of artless *espièglerie*. She was evidently a country beauty, somewhat vain and spoiled; but ingenuous, innocent, and affectionate. There was no awkwardness about her, none of the *gaucherie* of a raw country servant, and Miss Elliot felt they were for-

tunate in procuring a girl who would not require much training to the smart and orderly performance of her duties. They had dreaded the contrary; and Mary had made up her mind to undertake the irksome task of instructing her.

Nelly, though a little shy at first, was soon encouraged by Miss Elliot's gentleness, and before they reached Danube Street had communicated to her almost all her little history. She alluded gratefully to Miss Archer's kindness; but when answering a question of the young lady's relating to her parents, the recollection of the sorrowful parting that morning, made her heart so very full that she could not go on. Miss Elliot understood the feeling, and instantly dropped the conversation; but the gush of natural emotion interested her still more in Nelly.

They now proceeded in silence, and soon reached Danube Street, which Nelly, who had dried up her tears, viewed with great approba-

tion, for it is a smart, clean-looking little street, though too near the stagnant river which disgraces that quarter of the town ; and in a few minutes more she had been presented to her mistress, and with many blushes had made her initiatory curtsey. Mrs. Elliot was as much pleased as her daughter with Nelly's appearance, while the girl secretly congratulated herself on now having to serve what she called a "real lady." It showed Nelly's discernment, for both Mrs. and Miss Elliot were remarkable for quiet and elegant manners. But servants are seldom mistaken in their judgment of their betters.

Nelly was less satisfied with her fellow-servant. Martha was still and cold in manner, and Nelly was sensible that she eyed her scrutinizingly. She feared that she might find her as strict and particular as Betty ; and such a suspicion was far from pleasing. A chill crept over Nelly as she followed her down stairs to the kitchen.

Martha, however, meant to be kind to the stranger, though it was not her way to conciliate by words or looks. She saw Nelly was fatigued with her journey, and a little agitated besides ; so after the girl had laid aside her shawl and bonnet, she desired her, though in rather an authoritative tone, to sit down by the bright kitchen fire. Martha had already carried the tea-things to the drawing-room, so she speedily and silently prepared tea for Nelly, to her great comfort and refreshment. Her little tongue absolutely quivered with questions which she longed to ask, and which she would have addressed to a fellow-servant like Janet, ere she had been more than five minutes in her company. But Martha looked so stiff and dignified as she moved about the kitchen, that Nelly felt she could sooner venture to take liberties with the ladies up stairs than with the individual before her. So she sat quite demure and respectful ; only as she partook of her tea, she could not help casting

furtive and timid looks at her companion—who she thought seemed more fitted for a parlour than a kitchen—wondering if all the servants in Edinburgh resembled her. But then she remembered Janet, and poor little Nelly sighed as she thought of the comfortable gossipings in the old back court.

Martha, however, was considerably pleased with Nelly's looks, though the latter did not imagine so. But from her former position of trust in a large establishment, she had had much experience of servitude, not always of the most satisfactory kind, and she was inclined to be a strict disciplinarian. Her severity had its origin in principle, not in temper, though Martha's temper was not naturally an easy one. Nelly certainly looked a little giddy, and Martha had decided at the first glance that she would require both restraint and admonition ; still she seemed so good-humoured and artless, that Martha had no objections to a little extra trouble on her account. She determined to be a friend to her

—that is, if she found her, as she thought she should, truthful and obliging.

Still, Martha, good woman though she was, could not forget that Nelly was a simple country girl accustomed to inferior service, while she had been for many years a confidential servant in a family of consequence. She would not acknowledge her as an equal. Her kindness was the kindness of a superior. Nelly's awe of her was not likely to wear off. Nay, before the evening was over, Nelly began to think that even Betty's company was preferable to that of this quiet, dignified-looking fellow-servant, who had never testified the slightest curiosity regarding the events of her journey, or, indeed, scarcely spoken but to desire her to wash up the tea-things she had brought from above, and afterwards to inform her where to place them.

Nelly was very glad when bed-time came, especially as she was to have a separate bedroom from Martha. Her last thoughts were of

her parents, and she sobbed herself to sleep. She was lonely and dull in a strange place. But a night's sound rest revived her spirits, and she was full of curiosity and activity in the morning. She was pleased with both her mistresses, pleased with the neatness and elegance of the house, pleased with the anticipation of seeing the town, and willing to recommend herself to Martha by diligence and civility. But still she had no one to talk to, and her tongue craved its usual exercise. A parrot would have been an acquisition in the circumstances; but there was not even a canary-bird or a cat in Mrs. Elliot's establishment. Poor Nelly! it was a sad restraint to her. All she could do to divert herself was to look out of window as often as she could, unobserved; and, indeed her head was oftener projected thence, than Martha might have considered either safe or decorous.

The following letter, written by Nelly to her friends a few days after her arrival in town, will

exhibit her feelings regarding her new situation.

“ Dear Father, and Mother, and Jamie,

“ This comes to say I am well—hoping it will find you the same. I got here safely on Friday, and liked the drive, though wearied. The people were all civil, and I gave the coachman what you bade me, and Mrs. Elliot has paid me it back handsome. Our young lady was waiting for me, and took me home, so I did not lose myself as you feared. Dear father and mother, I have got a very good place. The mistress is a *born* lady, and both she and Miss Elliot are very kind to me. They have had misfortunes; but they are real gentry, and not half so high as the Miss Macadams, the retired tea-merchant’s daughters. But I don’t like my neighbour servant. She has never a word to say, and she is always looking after me, as if I could not be trusted. You may be sure it was not her who told me about

the mistress ; and it would have been the same if I had been here six years, I believe—she would never have hinted a word of it. It was an old bowl-wife who came down the airy yesterday, when Martha was at the market, and who I had a talk with. I think she knows everybody from the way she speaks. But Martha came back when she was there, which I was sorry for ; for she ordered her off, and then found fault with me for speaking to her, as if she was my mistress, or as if I could have helped it. I don't mean to say that she is not a good woman, but she is only a servant like myself, and I don't like being domineered over by the like of her. But the mistress I see sets great store by her ; and after all she is not a bad neighbour, only it's dull to have no one to speak to. And we have worship night and morning, which I know you will be glad to hear ; and I went to the mistress's church on Sabbath, where there's a very good preacher, only he reads

his sermons, which our Mr. Rorison never does. And at night the mistress read to us, and gave me a great many good advices, which you may be sure I will try to follow. But, dear father and mother, this is the beautifulest place you ever saw — Langtown isn't worth the naming after it. I have not seen much of it yet, as I do not know the streets; but the mistress has promised to let me out some day soon, and then I may meet with Janet. But the water which passes here, and which they call the water of Leith, is the dirtiest sight I ever saw—far worse than the Jaw-hole at the end of the Row; and I wonder the fine folks can bear such a thing near them. I wish you saw the fish-wives and the shops. I hope my mother is not fretting herself about me, for I am sure I will try to behave well. And give my respects to Miss Archer, and to all friends, not forgetting Tam Drummond—Mr. Brown's man—for he was very

civil, and went a message for me the night before I came away. So no more, at present, dear mother and father, from

“Your affectionate daughter,

“HELEN ARMSTRONG.”

Nelly's letter, on the whole, was very satisfactory to her parents. They thought it for her benefit to be under restraint, and were pleased to learn that her mistress made a duty of instructing her. And Mrs. Armstrong waited upon Miss Archer to deliver Nelly's message, and, at the same time, to inform her how much the letter had relieved her mind. Nor was Tam Drummond, one of Nelly's old sweet-hearts, forgotten.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. ELLIOT considered it a duty incumbent upon her to instruct and advise her servants. While they remained with her they formed part of her family, and she anxiously desired to improve the connection. It was an opportunity of doing good, and such she never neglected. Advancing years and delicate health were lessening her sphere of usefulness, though she had never been at any time, that most mistaken character—a religious busy-body. What she did was always done silently and unostentatiously. Mrs.

Elliot was never seen hurrying from one meeting to another, utterly forgetful of home and domestic duties. Though far from being censorious, she strongly condemned such conduct as a waste of time, and as most prejudicial to personal piety. She took a deep interest, however, in all religious and philanthropic schemes, and her purse was always cheerfully opened at such calls, though her name seldom appeared in the list of contributors. She aided while others declaimed. She was one of those who let not "their left hand know what their right hand doeth;" for even the most intimate of her Christian friends knew not the extent of her beneficence, or of her visits to the poor and afflicted. She sought privacy, and she found it; for it is only those, we believe, who merely *affect* to desire it, that have their acts of benevolence made public.

Nelly was fortunate in obtaining such a mistress, especially when a stranger to town.

She was as certain of being guarded from temptation in Mrs. Elliot's house, as if she had still been under her parents' wing. With great sweetness of disposition, Mrs. Elliot possessed firmness in the discharge of duty. Pure and high-minded—shrinking from the very appearance of evil—she kept a strict watch over the morals of her household. Perhaps she was old-fashioned in this and in some of her maxims; but their effects showed their significance. She considered no mistress, who had not done her utmost, by advice and by the arrangement of her household affairs, to shield her domestics from temptation, warranted to be severe in her condemnation of the poor victim of it. But, though marking her abhorrence of the sin, she was ever tender in judging of the sinner. Humility was her own distinguishing characteristic: and her acquaintance with that spring of all evil—the human heart—taught her to be lenient towards others. “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted,” was

her guide. Still, she was careful to discriminate between cherished and wilful transgression, and the effect of sudden temptation on an unstable and thoughtless mind. To the former she was justly severe, while, in regard to the latter, she considered it her duty to mingle mercy with reproof.

Alas! how much crime and misery might be saved if all mistresses of households acted in the same spirit as Mrs. Elliot! How many servants, especially in large and fashionable establishments, are wantonly and thoughtlessly exposed to temptation! And when they have yielded to it, how often are they remorselessly precipitated on what proves a downward and awful course!

Yes, most virtuous woman—ornament as you may be to society—exemplary as is the abhorrence you have just expressed for the vice, whose discovery has thrown your household into confusion, you must answer to God for your furtherance of that poor wretch's crime.

You received her innocent into your family—how have you protected that innocence? If you have not endeavoured to do so, and have expelled her disgraced, helpless, and it may be almost penniless upon the world, shudder at the probable consequences of your harshness! Mercy in such circumstances was only your duty!

Mrs. Elliot soon detected Nelly's foibles. She saw she was vain and giddy, and too much inclined to gossip. These qualities united with her pretty face were somewhat dangerous. But she was also innocent and guileless. Mrs. Elliot, like Martha, judged she would require restraint. Too much of that, however, is as injurious as too little; and she preferred to attach Nelly to herself, and to impress her lessons on the girl's mind by kindness and indulgence. Compassionating the restlessness and curiosity which for some days after her arrival were very apparent, Mrs. Elliot sent her with a proper guide to see the wonders of the town;

and much amused were she and her daughter by the girl's *naïve* descriptions of what she had seen. They encouraged her to talk, though little understanding what a relief it was to Nelly to be allowed to do so. Martha had not asked her a question about her walk, and she was burning to speak of it. Mrs. Elliot granted her a similar indulgence once or twice, guessing that when her curiosity was fully gratified, she would be more steady and contented.

And so she was. Mrs. Elliot was pleased to see her cheerful and active; and Martha had no further cause to complain, as she had done, of her moping and forgetfulness.

Nelly was of too affectionate a disposition to remain insensible to her mistress's kindness. But to Miss Elliot, she speedily became warmly attached, having recourse to her in all her little difficulties, and showing her gratitude by many trifling but earnest services. She delighted to talk to Miss Elliot of Winstraelea and her

parents ; and Mary, when they were alone together, kindly encouraged her to do so. Still, though Nelly's simplicity led her to speak freely to her young mistress, she was always respectful, and never presumed on her indulgence. This soon made her a favourite with both ladies. Both were anxious to be of use to her, as they had been the means of removing her from under her parents' protection, and exposing her to the temptations of town ; and they permitted her a liberty of speech which they might have checked in other circumstances.

Nelly was happy in her new situation : still she sometimes wished that her mistress were not quite so strict, or that a little more company were kept. There was no stir, nothing ever going on in the house to enliven one. Mrs. Elliot entertained no guests now except at tea, and Nelly would have liked a little bustle and gaiety, even though it gave her additional labour. Besides she durst not go out with-

out permission. In the country there had been nothing to prevent her running down almost every evening, to her father's cottage, or having a comfortable flirtation over the garden hedge with any young man who came to visit her. Such liberty, of course, was impossible in a town family—at least one like Mrs. Elliot's. There everything was quiet, orderly, and by rule. No gadding, no followers, no gossipings could be tolerated there. Nelly had always plenty of leisure allowed her for keeping her clothes in order, and for reading—Mrs. Elliot lent her books. But Nelly would have preferred spending her spare time in a more lively manner—chatting in short with some congenial spirit. If Martha had been less steady and grave, Nelly would have been more content. As it was, she was not quite certain whether she had not been more cheerful in the country. No doubt, the town was a fine place, but then she seldom saw it, and she had not an acquaintance in it except Janet, and where to find her

she knew not ; no correspondence having taken place between the friends for the simple reason, that one of them could not write. But she had still hopes of meeting her on the street, though two months had passed by without a rencounter.

Oh ! how Nelly longed to have Janet for her fellow-servant ! The town would have a different aspect then. It was so dull sitting in the same kitchen with Martha. Besides Martha thoroughly understood her business as a servant, and often justly found fault with Nelly for the neglect or careless performance of her duties ; and she occasionally gave her advice, which Nelly heartily disliked.

The visits of the old bowl-woman, alluded to in her letter to her parents, were a great comfort to her. Old Leezie never called when Martha was within. Martha did the marketing, and always at the same time of day ; and Leezie timed her appearances accordingly. She was a shrewd-looking, cunning old woman,

whose battered straw-bonnet covering her grizzled locks, and shabby cloak and gown, gave her a look the reverse of respectable; but she had an immense fund of gossip, and was an adept in the style of flattery most acceptable to one like Nelly. She soon drew from the latter her history, and various particulars relating to the family in which she resided—her own grievances of course, for there was no resisting Leezie's method of catechizing: it was inquisitive and fawning at the same time.

Nelly regarded her as a respectable poor woman, who was struggling to earn a decent livelihood. She was a widow, she informed Nelly; all her family were dead or scattered, and the young inexperienced girl felt much sympathy for her desolate condition. She eked out her living the old woman also said, by taking lodgers, humble ones of course, and by selling carpet shoes and crockery. Nelly in compassion, purchased a pair of shoes from

her, and promised her future custom. But Leezie had other means of subsistence than those enumerated. She was a purchaser of old clothes, rags, bottles—indeed of all articles that servants find it easy and profitable to dispose of. She insinuated this to Nelly at their first interview, but she had no old clothes to bargain about, and was too simple and honest even to suspect the old woman's drift. This Leezie instantly detected; still she continued to visit Nelly occasionally, "just to have a little talk with her," she said.

"I'm wae to see a braw young lassie like you getting nae liberty this way," she said to her one morning, in tones of pretended pity. "I suppose your mistress is feared that if you aince get out, ye'll hae sae mony followers that they'll keep ye idle; or is't that sour auld maid o' a cook that hauds ye down sae?"

Nelly tossed her head, half pleased with the old wretch's compliment to her good looks, half nettled that she should be supposed under

the dominion of a fellow-servant. "Do ye think I wad submit to be ruled by the like of her?" she answered.

"Ye wad be a fule if ye did, at ony rate," said the other. "But what for then do ye get out sae seldom? Can they no trust ye a night to yoursell, I wonder? Ye maun be unco gude-natured to submit to't."

"I'm sure I canna say," said Nelly, hesitating; "the mistress kens I'm a stranger in the toun."

"But ye'll hae the Sabbaths to yoursell—whaur do ye gang on the Sabbaths?"

"I gang naewhere but to the kirk," said Nelly, simply. "Whaur else wad I gang? and the mistress taks me wi' her."

"Hoot, woman, but that's unco bondage!" exclaimed the old woman; "if I were you, I wadna bide lang in sic a place. If ye had the Sabbaths to yoursell like other lasses, ye wadna be lang o' getting a lad to tak a walk wi' ye,

I'se warrant." And she leered cunningly in Nelly's face.

"I'm no wanting ony lads," said Nelly; again tossing her little head saucily.

"Weel, if ye dinna want them, my joe, I'se be bound they'll want you," replied the bowl-woman, with a nod. "But I maun awa. Ye'll hae nae rags, or bottles, or a bit kitchen fee to sell the day, I reckon? I can gie ye a gude price for them."

"How should I hae them?" said Nelly.

"Ou, ye micht hae them as perquisites; mony lassies here get them. Weel, since ye hae gotten naething, I jalouse I had better be aff." And lifting her basket, which had been resting by the kitchen door during the conversation, she slowly mounted the area stairs and disappeared.

Nelly was careful to conceal these visits of the old bowl-woman from Martha, in case she might be again checked for idling away her

time gossiping with her. "It would be hard enough," she thought, "when I've sae few folk to speak to. I had mair liberty in the country than here."

Nelly's letters, as yet, arrived regularly at Winstraelea. Filled with warm encomiums on both mistresses they generally were, mingled with the detail of such grievances as we have described. The parents, however, saw much to approve in Mrs. Elliott's domestic arrangements, and urged contentment upon her. They even began to think that her going to town was scarcely to be regretted, as the experience and knowledge she would gain there would serve to fit her for a superior situation in the country.

CHAPTER IV.

THE winter passed away with great quietness. Nelly had by this time almost forgot the former freedom she had enjoyed, and was considerably reconciled to the sober ways of the family in Danube Street. She now took some pleasure in reading, and, under Martha's superintendence, promised fair to become a steady and valuable servant. All this time she had seen nothing of Janet.

Mrs. Elliot and her daughter received a pressing invitation to spend the spring months, which in Edinburgh are very trying to a delicate



constitution, with some friends in the country. It was accepted, and as they required to have a servant with them, they decided, principally on her own account, that Nelly should accompany them. Nelly was all joyful anticipation in the prospect of an introduction to new scenes and people. It certainly unsettled her for a time, and Martha had to renew her former remonstrances.

Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, of Drumore, were very old friends of the Elliots. The young people of both families had been like brothers and sisters from infancy—almost inseparable. They had met little of late years, as the Elliots lived in town, and the Stewarts only occasionally spent a winter there. But Charlotte Stewart was still Mary's bosom friend and correspondent.

Their residence was in Perthshire, in the neighbourhood of Craiglee. It was a large, roomy, handsome house, and Mr. Stewart

was a man of considerable fortune. The family were much liked, for they were lively, warm-hearted, and extremely hospitable, and they were seldom without visitors of some kind or other, either in summer or winter. Two years had elapsed since the Elliots had been at Drumore—not from want of earnest invitations, but because Mrs. Elliot had been ordered sea-bathing.

A joyful welcome greeted them on their arrival. Nelly was delighted to see how much her young lady was caressed and made of. The house, too, was a greater one than Nelly had dreamt of, and she was flattered and overpowered with the civilities paid to herself in the servants' hall. Mr. Mackay the butler—a very fine gentleman, Nelly thought—speedily proclaimed himself her devoted admirer; and, ere long, Davies the gardener, entered the lists as his rival; Nelly, receiving the attentions of both with most

praiseworthy impartiality. But as it is not our intention, in this chapter, to detail her adventures at Drumore, we shall pass on to those which there befell her young mistress, merely stating, for the reader's enlightenment, that Nelly's visit afforded her the most entire and overflowing satisfaction.

Mary Elliot again rambled through all the well-remembered scenes of her former home, with a pleasure which was unavoidably mingled with pain. That home was hers no longer—there was no prospect now of returning to it. It was a sweet spot, and as if to increase her regret in parting from it, seemed to Mary sweeter than ever.

Craiglee was a comfortable, old-fashioned country-house, with picturesque winding wood-walks on each side, and craggy, heathy heights, well stocked with grouse and mountain game, rising boldly behind it. A small, but rapid river was close by, and Sczehallion and his

brother giants pierced the clouds in the remote distance.

A quiet, green valley, through which the river meandered, and which it sometimes overflowed, was in front, closed in by wooded hills of every picturesque form. A pretty manse and church, the latter surrounded by an old grave-yard, were situated advantageously on one of the slopes. Each of these hills seemed a friend to Mary, and often had she risen in the morning to watch the silvery mists roll off their brows.

They had only been one day at Drumore when their relations, the new possessors of Craiglee, waited upon them. They found them excellent, pleasant people, who really seemed to regret that distance of residence had prevented each making the other's acquaintance till now. And there was a degree of delicacy and consideration in their allusions to family matters, which touched and agreeably surprised

Mrs. Elliot and Mary, who had scarcely expected it from them.

Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, of Craiglee, were a respectable old-fashioned couple, whom former limited means had prevented mingling much in society. But though their manners were plain and unassuming, they were not vulgar. They were indeed worthy, warm-hearted people, anxious to fulfil the duties of their new sphere, though as yet not quite certain what these consisted of. They had gained a good deal of experience however, during the three months they had resided at Craiglee, and were now tolerably at their ease. Mr. Elliot had formerly lived on a small property of his own, which he farmed, and he had married the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman. Her elder sister, a pleasant, single-minded old spinster, had resided with them for some years, forming, like many of that much-maligned class, an invaluable member of the family, especially in times of

sickness and affliction. The house would have been dull without Aunt Bess.

The old couple had no family save one son, a young man of five-and-twenty. He was now at home, having lately returned from abroad, where he had been some years in a mercantile house. His parents had succeeded to Craiglee just before his visit; and it was their wish that he should now resign his situation, and reside at home. It was necessary, however, that he should return to Buenos Ayres for a short time.

"We spared him when it was necessary, Ma'am," said his father to Mrs. Elliot; "but now it is a different thing. Though I shall not allow him to be idle—idleness is ruin to a young man—I mean him to keep all my papers and accounts in order. But he is a fine fellow, George, Ma'am, though I say it that should not; and it is a great comfort to his mother and me to have him with us."

He was indeed a very fine young man, as his father said—well-principled, well-informed, with quiet but pleasing manners. Mrs. Elliot thought so, and so did Mary after he had once accompanied her through the familiar wood-walks of Craiglee. Her gentleness and sweetness also made an impression upon him. He was sorry too for the fair young girl whose tie to that spot had been so suddenly and unexpectedly broken; and he could sympathize with the feelings which he knew must be filling her breast on thus revisiting it after so long an absence. Therefore it was to her side he attached himself during the ramble, leaving her young companions, the Stewarts, to be attended by the gentlemen of their party; and Mary Elliot was fully sensible of the motive of his attention, and perhaps liked him all the better for it.

She soon became a favourite with his father

and mother, and Aunt Bess. They were very tender to her, and always addressed her by the title of "my dear." Their kindness had nothing of patronage in it—it was genuine, hearty, unsophisticated friendliness, and Mary felt it was so. Her first painful feelings on revisiting Craiglee gradually lessened; and she, at length, could feel happy that her dear old home was in the possession of such worthy people. It might have been so different. Nay more, she could accept with pleasure at the latter end of the visit to the Stewarts, a pressing invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, to stay a week with them at Craiglee. Her friend, Charlotte Stewart, was also invited to accompany her, "that she might not weary," good, considerate Mrs. Elliot said, "without a companion of her own age."

It was a very happy week to both girls, but particularly to Mary. She was installed in her own old room, Mrs. Elliot having the

delicacy to think that it would be most agreeable to her young guest. It was now appropriated to Aunt Bess—but she, good soul, lost no time in removing all her goods and chattels, to accommodate Mary Elliot.

“To be sure, Nancy,” she said cheerfully, when her sister proposed the change to her; “it will be much pleasanter for her to be in her own room, poor dear, for there she will feel more at home, as it were. It was very considerate of you to think of it, and it is no trouble to me to remove. And don’t you think, Nancy, that as she may be visiting you again some time or other, it will be better for me just to sleep always in the little blue room at the end of the passage, that this one may be in readiness for her.”

“But the blue room must be cold in winter, Bess; and you know you are troubled with rheumatism,” said her sister. “You must

take the room next to mine, which is much warmer."

"Well, I'm sure Nancy, that is very kind of you," said Aunt Bess, gratefully, "though I have no doubt the blue room would suit me very well, and is quite large enough. I could nail a little worsted tape round the window, and make it quite snug. Well, just as you please then, but you always give yourself far too much trouble about me. I am sure I ought to be thankful for kind friends." And the grateful little woman's eyes glistened with genuine emotion.

Mary Elliot took possession of her old room with gratitude to Mrs. Elliot for having thought of such an attention. Neither of the ladies mentioned that it had been vacated for her. Aunt Bess was lodged in the warm south chamber, where it was settled she was to remain permanently; and Mrs. Elliot, when she conducted Mary and Charlotte to their

room, told the former that it should always be reserved for her, at the same time expressing a hope that she would often gratify them by occupying it.

“What dear, good people they are!” said Charlotte Stewart, as the door closed on their hostess.

Mary was gazing round the old familiar apartment and thinking of former times. Her eyes were filled with tears.

“Yes,” she warmly answered. “How considerate to think that I would prefer my own room! Oh! Charlotte, the time that has passed since I left it seems like a dream. And to invite me so cordially to return! I feel already as if I loved them all.”

“Mr. George Elliot included, I suppose,” said Charlotte, rather archly, for the young man’s attentions to Mary had been observed and discussed by all her friends in private.

Mary returned no answer—perhaps she did

not hear her friend's remark, for at the moment it was uttered, she was gazing earnestly out of window.

If the old people remarked their son's attentions to Mary Elliot, they were certainly not displeased by them, for no impediment was thrown in the way. They were left for hours to each other's society. Besides, their own kindness to Mary rather increased than diminished on further acquaintance. They were anxious she should feel entirely at home, and occupy herself as she pleased, without reference to them.

"We are old-fashioned people, Miss Elliot," said her hostess the first morning of her visit, "and we have our own humdrum ways. Now we would not like to constrain you, my dears. George will walk with you, if you like, or perhaps you would prefer to be alone together. Just do whatever you like best, my dears, and we will be satisfied."

George evidently preferred to walk with the young ladies, and they apparently had no objections to this arrangement. There never was a more indefatigable escort than he was during the week that Mary Elliot and her friend remained at Craiglee. Aunt Bess sometimes accompanied them in their walks; but that good soul generally contrived to indulge her nephew, to whom she was much attached, with many a *tête-à-tête* with Mary, while she purposely lagged behind with Charlotte Stewart.

Charlotte herself was not blind to the impression her friend had evidently made on George Elliot, and rejoiced in it. He was already much liked in the neighbourhood. As a match for Mary, he was unexceptionable — indeed, she feared it was almost too desirable a thing to be realized. He had been a great deal in Mary's company since she had arrived at Drumore. There were only a few miles between the latter house and Craiglee, and they had

seen him almost daily in either house, or in their walks and drives.

That he admired Mary was evident. Without being entitled to be called beautiful, there was a sweetness and frankness in her countenance, which rendered it extremely attractive. Her manners were elegant, and her mind highly cultivated. They thought alike on most subjects; and Mary found that all her favourite spots at Craiglee, by a wonderful similarity of taste, were also his. Such harmony of tastes and opinions, with constant opportunities for comparing them, could hardly exist without producing some effect.

Perhaps that was the reason why Mary Elliot looked so fluttered and absent when she returned from a late walk on the last evening of her visit. George Elliot had been her companion during it. Aunt Bess and Charlotte had left the house in their company, but they did not return together. The fact was, that Aunt Bess,

soon after they set out, suddenly recollected that she had a visit to pay to an old woman in the village, and so carried off Charlotte Stewart, nothing loth, with her in that direction. The others walked on, unconscious indeed of the desertion.

On their return, Mary hastily separated from her companion in the hall. But instead of entering the drawing-room, where she supposed Mr. and Mrs. Elliot would be quietly sitting as usual, she hurried to her own room. She, however, in the passage which led to it, encountered her good hostess, whose eye was instantly arrested by Mary's flushed cheek and agitated air.

"Are you well, my dear?" she asked, with much anxiety, as her young guest stood suddenly still on seeing her.

Poor Mary burst into tears for answer, and then felt ashamed of her emotion.

"Come into your own room, my dear," said

Mrs. Elliot, kindly ; “ I am afraid you have walked too far and fatigued yourself.” And she gently led her into the room, and seating her in a chair, began in a soothing, motherly way to remove her bonnet and shawl, without taking further notice of her agitation. Mary’s emotion, however, rather increased than diminished, and at last a suspicion of the cause dawned upon Mrs. Elliot. It only made her more tender to Mary. She put back the hair from her flushed cheek, and kissed it affectionately.

“ I am afraid George has been saying something when you were out, to vex you, my dear,” she said at length, quietly

“ Oh ! no,” said Mary, hurriedly ; “ that is ——,” and she paused and coloured more deeply than before.

“ Foolish child,” said Mrs. Elliot, laughing heartily, and touching her cheek ; “ do you think that I have not been observing what has been going on this little while ? Ay ! you look

up now and stare at me, but it is quite true, my dear. We have not been blind, though perhaps both George and you thought we were. Well, my dear, is it all fixed?"

"Dear Mrs. Elliot, are you really in earnest?" said Mary in faltering accents.

"To be sure I am; why, my dear, what objection could we make? George is an only son, and his father wants him to marry early; and where could he get a nicer wife than yourself? My good man just said to me this very morning, when we were talking about George, 'I wish, Nancy, he would ask that bonnie, wise-like young lassie, before she leaves this; it would be better than going to Edinburgh all the way to do it.' But George knows nothing of this, my dear; we both knew it would not do to meddle with a thing of this kind; young people are best left to themselves. But I hope he told you that he will require to go abroad again for another year. It is very

sad to part with him, but it is only acting rightly by his employers, who have been very kind to him."

"Oh yes! he explained all this, dear Mrs. Elliot," said Mary, gratefully, and endeavouring to overcome her confusion at this unexpected confidence. "But how generous of you and Mr. Elliot to be so easily satisfied with me!—you know I have no fortune."

"What of that my dear, since George will have enough for you both? Besides, it is just giving you back what you lost; and I assure you, my dear, though I was naturally glad on George's account that we succeeded to this estate, I felt very much for you and your mamma at that time—Mr. Elliot and Bess know I did."

Mary's heart was deeply touched, and she put her arms round the good old lady's neck and kissed her. She had returned to the house in doubt and perplexity—pretty sensible

of the state of her heart, yet afraid to give free utterance to its pleadings. But now this cordial reception was as cheering as it was unexpected. It removed all difficulties from her path, for she was certain that her mother would not disapprove of her lover.

"Thank you, my dear," said Mrs. Elliot, placidly, in answer to Mary's embrace. "I am sure we shall be very happy together. I never had a daughter, but I have always wished for one. Now lie down on your bed and rest yourself for a little, for you really look as if you needed it. You had better not come down stairs till the bell rings for prayers. I want to see George now."

And smiling and nodding kindly to the fluttered, but now happy girl, Mrs. Elliot left the room, and went in search of her son, whom she found in his father's study. The old gentleman was as accommodating to his son's wishes as the mother. They had both

taken a strong fancy to Mary, and they perhaps felt there was a kind of poetical justice in thus restoring her to Craiglee. They were anxious too, as Mrs. Elliot had informed Mary, that their son should marry early.

“It is such a great wide house this,” the old lady had recently remarked to her husband, “so much bigger than Swanston, that I feel somehow dreary and lost in it. There’s George’s room at the end of one passage, and ours at the end of another, and the servants’ rooms at such a distance from us, that they might as well be out of the house. Now, if George was married, we might have his wife, and then, maybe, his children, to fill it up, and make it more cheerful-like. Two or three bairns make a place stirring and heartsome, and I am really wearying to be a grandmother.”

“Well, George has my consent to marry

when he likes," said her husband, sturdily ; "that is, if he marries a sensible woman ; and I think he is a lad that may be trusted in that matter."

These remarks were made by the old couple a few days before they called for Mrs. Elliot and Mary, which duty they discharged with punctilious attention whenever they learned of their arrival in the neighbourhood. Miss Elliot was just the girl to please the worthy pair. No airs or affectation about her, and though she looked so quiet and gentle, very chatty and pleasant when one came to converse with her. They were nice girls the Stewarts, the old people agreed, when talking over their visit on their way home, but they liked Miss Elliot best. And her mother seemed a most excellent lady, with whom it was really a privilege to get acquainted.

"She is just the girl I should like for a daughter-in-law," was Mrs. Elliot's inward

conclusion about Mary. And she speedily confided it to Aunt Bess, who was as anxious as herself, that George should bring a nice pleasant young wife to increase the family comfort. After living some years abroad, they feared he might grow tired of home if he had not a wife to keep him there.

“Of course,” said his indulgent mother, “a young man like him would in time weary of living just with old folks. And then he would not like to leave us for fear of hurting our feelings, and this would make him uncomfortable. But I have always noticed that a wife cures a young man of wandering—that is if he is a proper well-conducted young man, and I am sure our George is. Now, Bess, it would be a great blessing to us all, if George would marry when he returns from abroad, and settle quietly here.”

“No doubt, Nancy; and then they say she is very accomplished and clever, and all that;

which will just suit George, who is so clever himself."

So the two worthy old ladies began to plot and manœuvre to throw the young people into each other's company as much as possible and took every opportunity of commending Mary before the young man. Fortunately, he did not suspect their drift, for there is something in human nature which resists such interference, and he fell as quietly and unconsciously in love, as if his mother and aunt had never planned the match. It was a deep stroke of policy, they considered, the inviting her to pass some time with them; and it succeeded to their wishes. A young man of George Elliot's disposition could not be constantly brought into contact with a girl like Mary—in his own home especially—without appreciating her. In the crowd she might have passed unnoticed; but in a quiet domestic circle she was sure to charm.

Her friend Charlotte was scarcely surprised to

find Mary nervous and conscious-looking, when she returned with Aunt Bess from their judicious visit to old Jenny—after which they had extended their walk, but not in the direction in which their companions had gone.

Aunt Bess, too, soon learnt from her sister, what had occurred and immediately began to consider what wedding present she could contrive for her future niece. Her purse was not a heavy one, for she would not allow her friends to replenish it at their pleasure, and she had to exercise economy to have a surplus for her little charities. Sometimes her sister succeeded in forcing a new dress upon her; and her nephew had lately, to her unbounded gratitude—for all these gifts were most unexpected by her—presented her with a handsome black satin gown, which poor Aunt Bess, however, thought far too fine for her to wear. She did not ponder long on the subject

of the present. She was a great worker, and she resolved she would set about a handsome carriage bag.

“It will do so nicely for the wedding jaunt,” thought Aunt Bess, quite pleased with the idea. “The first time John goes with the dog-cart to Perth, I will go along with him, and choose the pattern and the wools.”

Mary received a hearty shake of the hand, and a kiss from the old gentleman, when, with much trepidation in her new circumstances, she ventured to descend to the drawing-room with Charlotte. She would have preferred remaining up-stairs for the rest of the evening, but the first meeting with George’s father, she felt, must be an embarrassing one, and the sooner it was over the better. The old couple seated her between them, and made much of her. Aunt Bess, too, trotted into the room to give her a kiss, leaving it immediately afterwards with watery eyes. And, at last, George himself

made his appearance, and somehow or other the young pair soon found themselves left alone; nor were they disturbed till the bell rang for prayers. Supper followed, and a very happy meal it was, though two of the individuals that surrounded the table were unusually silent, and one was embarrassed and agitated by the events of the last few hours.

Mrs. Elliot could not but rejoice in her daughter's prospects. She highly esteemed the young man and all his family. Otherwise, not even the temptation of seeing her Mary restored to Craiglee, would have induced her to sanction his suit. And she knew her daughter's principles too well to believe that mercenary motives had influenced her. The only thing she regretted was the short period of their acquaintance—not more than three months—but during that time they had been almost daily in each other's society. Besides, the marriage must be deferred for some time, as George Elliot had

to return abroad. She therefore gave her cordial consent.

It was now necessary that she should return to Edinburgh, and notwithstanding the entreaties of her friends, she persevered in her resolution. Martha had been too long alone. But as George Elliot was not to sail for upwards of two months, she invited him to pass some time in Edinburgh with them in the interval, which he joyfully agreed to. Mr. and Mrs. Elliot were grieved to part with Mary now that they felt she so far belonged to them—but they were consoled by the promise of a visit at Christmas. And the lovers were separated for a short time—to meet, however, only to part for a longer and more trying period.

CHAPTER V.

ONE morning, about a week after their return to town, Nelly was despatched by her mistress on an errand to Stockbridge market. She had accomplished it, and was preparing to ascend the steps which lead into Market Street on her return, when, to her delight and astonishment she recognised in a servant girl about to descend them, her old friend, Janet. Not the Janet of Winstraelea, however, the dull slatternly drudge of Mr. and Mrs. McMurdo's establishment—but smartened, tidied, and greatly improved in consequence. At the first

glance, Nelly scarcely knew her. Each recognised the other at the same moment.

“ Janet—is’t possible this can be you ?”

“ Preserve us a’ Nelly ! whatna wind’s blawn you here, lass ?” And the two girls looked in each other’s faces for some seconds, and then fell to laughing at their mutual surprise.

“ When did ye come here, Nelly ?” inquired Janet, when she had composed herself.

“ I came here last November,” said Nelly.

“ And me never to ken onything about it a’ that time ! Weel, it beats a’ !”

“ But whaur are ye biding ?” said Nelly, in a perfect flutter of satisfaction at meeting her friend. “ I hope it’s near here.”

“ Up the hill a bit,” with a motion of her head to indicate the direction ; “ and whaur are you ?”

“ Oh ! I’m wi’ Mrs. Elliot in Danube Street ;” said little Nelly with some dignity,

thinking her former acquaintance would be overawed with the splendour of her *locale*.

“Wi’ Mrs. Elliot? Ou’ that’ll be the lady that was in Heriot Row,” said Janet with indifference. “I dinna envy ye your place, Nelly. They say she’s ane o’ the unco gude, and that servants get nae liberty wi’ her.”

So answered Janet, as changed in manner as in dress. Times were evidently improved with her. Nelly was now the inferior.

“And so ye’re wi’ Mrs. Elliot; and does she ever let ye out lass?”

“No muckle,” said Nelly, blushing and laughing, but evidently a little mortified with her friend’s coolness.

“I thought sae. A friend o’ mine was aince wi’ her, and left her because she couldna get the Sabbaths to hersell. Weel, Nelly, I’m glad to see ye.”

“And so am I to see you, Janet. But ye’ve surely gotten an unco grand place. I hardly

kent ye again. Ye werena sae weel put on at Mrs. McMurdo's, lass."

"I daursay no," replied Janet, coolly; "but I'm in another sort o' place, I can tell ye, whaur I've baith better wages, and less to do."

"But how did ye get it?" said Nelly, astonished.

"'Deed, it was just by a chance," said Janet. "Ye see I hadna got a place ava, and was at hame doing naething. I had put my name into a register, and as ane o' Mr. Maxwell Grey's servants turned ill between terms, and was sent awa, I got her place. And a very gude ane it is—plenty o' steer, and plenty o' liberty. I'm under-housemaid, and I help in the kitchen and laundry."

"I'm housemaid and table-maid," said Nelly.

"Hae ye nae man-servant in the house?" asked Janet; "how mony are ye a'thegither?"

“There’s just me and my neebor,” said Nelly, crestfallenly. “And oh! Janet, ye never saw sic a particular woman a’ your days. She’s at my heels frae morning till night; an’ she’s aye telling me about my duty, as if folk could aye be thinking about that. She’s far waur than Betty, though she hasna her tongue.”

“Ye’re a fule to tak it aff her hauns, Nelly. Ae servant has nae business to meddle wi anither; folk should be neebor-like. But she’ll surely no find faut if an auld freend like me should ca’ for ye.”

“I’m sure I dinna ken,” said Nelly, doubtfully; “I hope no; for oh! Janet woman, I hae been wearying sair, sair to see ye since I came to the toun; its no half sae canty a place as I thocht it wad be.”

“That’s because ye’re in sae strict a house, Nelly. I can tell ye we hae nae want o’ diversion up wi huz at Moray Place. But ye maun come and see for yoursell. Will ye get

out for the asking some night, do you think, woman ?”

“ I’ll try,” said Nelly, her looks brightening ; “ the mistress said she couldna let me out before, because I had nae acquaintances ; but now I’ll tell her I’ve met you, or I’ll get Miss Elliot to speak to her. Miss Elliot’s aye ready to do ane a kindness. She’s gaun to be married sune.”

“ Wha’s she to get ?”

“ Ou, a grand, grand gentleman awa in the country ; so, ye see, we’re just as great as your folks, Janet. But you’re no asking after your auld freends at Winstraelea.”

“ I care naething aboot them ; but how’s Betty ?”

“ As cankrey’s ever ; my word lass, but she gied you you’re kail het through the reek in auld days !”

“ I would like to see her try’t now,” said Janet. “ And how’s the McMurdo folk ?”

"The Captain's nose was redder than ever when I came awa, and they tell me the mistress is just at the down-lying again," replied Nelly.

"Eh, sirs! it's no possible," exclaimed Janet, raising her hands and eyes; "that'll be the tenth; I'm thankfu I'm oot o' the road."

"And she says, Janet, she put ye awa for your fauts."

"She's a muckle leear, then," said Janet, her wrath kindling fiercely; "I gied up the place mysell; I wadna hae staid for a' she could offer."

"Sae I tell't them. But oh! woman, I hae sae mony things to speak to ye aboot, if I had but time; but I daurna stay for fear they miss me."

"I'm in a hurry too," said Janet, "for we're to have a great dinner-party the day. I'm oot for something to the cook, and I wadna like to anger her. But I'll be down soon to see

ye, Nelly. I say—what did Tam Drummond say about your coming to the toun?”

“I never thought o’ asking him,” said Nelly.

“And hae ye gotten ony joes here yet?”

“No ane,” said Nelly, laughing and running off. “I’ll no listen to ye ony langer.” And away she hurried towards home, looking back often and nodding to her companion, who responded.

Nelly took the earliest opportunity of informing Miss Elliot that she had met an old acquaintance on the street, expressing her hope that Mary would use her influence with her mother that they might occasionally be allowed to see each other. Nelly, to strengthen her case, did not forget to remind Miss Elliot that Janet was the only friend she had in town.

“I am sure my mother will have no objections to your visiting or receiving visits from any *real* friend, Nelly; and I suppose this

young woman is a respectable person," said Miss Elliot, with her usual kindness.

"Oh! quite respectable, ma'am; Miss Archer knows her, ma'am. She was servant in the family next door to us at Winstraelea, and now she's in Mr. Maxwell Grey's, in Moray Place;" for Janet had given Nelly her direction.

"Well, I will speak to my mother, Nelly, and I dare say she will consent." And Nelly, warmly thanking the young lady, went away with a light heart.

"Mr. Maxwell Grey's!" said Mrs. Elliot, on her daughter's mentioning Nelly's request; "they are a very gay worldly family, I believe. It would be better for Nelly not to know their servants, as she is not over steady; but as she has no other friend but this girl in town, it would be harsh to refuse. Tell Nelly, my dear, since she has made you her emissary, that she will be permitted to see her friend occasionally."

Nelly was overjoyed at the success of her request. Janet called for her in a few days, and the friends had a long gossip in the privacy of Nelly's bedroom. Its effect was to render the latter considerably dissatisfied with her present situation. After residing for nearly three months in a large establishment she had not taken very kindly to Martha and quietness. Janet's description of the gaiety enjoyed by Mr. Maxwell Grey's servants, made the regularity and sobriety of Mrs. Elliot's house more dull and wearisome than ever. Janet spoke glibly of dress, and visiting, and young men; and when Nelly expressed her incredulity at some portions of her recitals, she pressed her to visit Moray Place some evening, and judge for herself.

"Ye'll be allowed to stay a while when ye're oot, I suppose?" said Janet.

"Ou, I dinna ken," said Nelly; "we've aye worship at nine punctually."

"I canna abide thae serious families," said Janet, scornfully; "they make as muckle wark about a little pleeshuring, as if a servant wasna to be trusted out o' their sight."

"But, dear me, Janet woman," said Nelly, more than half bewildered; "how is it ye contrive to hae a' thae folk at hame, and to get out sae often? your mistress maun be real gude-natured to allow it."

"My mistress kens naething aboot it, Nelly; she and the young leddies are aye oot themselves, or hae folk in; and she never troubles hersell aboot our on-gauns if the wark's dune; she's other things to think aboot."

"Eh! woman, but you're weel aff—no that the mistress here isna very kind, and I think my father and mother wad haud her to be the best o' the twa. But yet she might gie ane mair liberty; I'm sure I wadna abuse it."

"Ye mauna stay mair than this half year wi her Nelly. I'll speak to our cook, whose a

fine body, though she taks a drappie rather ower often. She kens mony families, and I daursay will hear o' a better service for ye, or maybe our mistress may take ye hersell; she was talking of keeping a maid for sewing and to wait on the young leddies."

"Oh! do you think she wad tak me, Janet? But I jalouse they'll be wanting me at hame."

"Never mind; stay in the town now that you've gotten there. There's never anything stirring yonder."

Nelly heaved a sigh. She felt it was true.

Janet continued to expatiate on the advantages of her present situation to the wondering Nelly. These principally consisted of perquisites—a species of toll levied by the servants on various household commodities—and in the opportunities they enjoyed of seeing their friends, and of visiting them in

return. Then there were no prayers, no catechizings, and no tiresome lectures and advices, Janet added :

“Eh ! hae ye no the books even on Sabbaths, Janet ?” cried Nelly, in rather uncomfortable surprise ; for she had been accustomed to consider the habit of family worship a test of respectability of character.

“Wha wad make worship ?” said Janet, coolly ; “the maister never did sic a thing I reckon a’ his days ; and the mistress has aye a headache for ordinar on Sabbath mornings, and keeps her bed for an hour or twa langer than usual.”

Nelly was silenced, and willing to be convinced.

“What kind o’ man’s the maister ?” she said, at length.

“Ou, I ken nae harm o’ him,” replied her friend ; “and they say he’s a gude man o’ business when he likes. But he’s aye taking’t

into his head that he's deeing o' some trouble or other, and making folk gang for the doctor. Whiles it's his heart, and other times it's his stomach or liver; the noo it's something ca'd the mucous membrane, which it seems is a' the fashionable disease at present. If it was true, he wad be mair to be pitied than onybody I ken, for he wad just be made up o' diseases. But he's no an ill body, and when thae fancies are oot o' his head, he's as weel's the lave; and they ken his way, and just let him take it, for it angers him to threep wi him. But oh! sirs, he takes a weary lift o' his bed at times, and there he lies graneing, they tell me, like ony wife in the straw; and naething a' the while the matter wi him but the nerves."

"Weel, I think he's to be pitied, poor man!" said Nelly.

Much additional information regarding the family did Nelly obtain from Janet—servants

from time immemorial being an inquisitive and curious race, to whom mislaid letters and keyholes are legitimate and respectable channels of intelligence. And Nelly's wish to enter it became stronger as she listened.

CHAPTER VI.

THE following Sunday, Nelly, on her way to church, met Janet. The latter was so showily and smartly drest, that Nelly could not help regarding her with wonder. Janet had sprung from a grub into a butterfly. Her gown, shawl and ribbons were so very brilliant, that giddy little Nelly felt envy rapidly rising in her heart towards her former humble companion. But that heart, with all its faults, was too generous a one to cherish such a feeling long ; and by the time they met, for Nelly first observed Janet at some distance, it had evaporated.

“Weel Janet, you’ve gotten on a’ your brows the day, I think,” was her good-humoured salutation.

Janet glanced with much complacency on her dress.

“Whaur are ye bound for Nelly?”

“To the kirk, to be sure—do ye no hear the bells?”

“Atweel I hear them. But whaur’s your folk; I thocht ye aye went wi’ them to the kirk?”

“Sae I do; but the mistress has been ill this morning, and baith Martha and Miss Elliot hae bidden wi’ her—I’m alane the day.”

“And are you really gaun to the kirk, then, Nelly?” said her friend in a tone of surprise.

“What way no?” Nelly answered in a similar accent.

“Because I think ye might be glad o’ the opportunity chance has thrown in your road o’

taking a walk instead—ye're a fule if ye aren'a."

"Oh! Janet, ye dinna mean to say that ye skip the kirk yoursell?"

"Whiles—I'm no sae strict-laced as you, Nelly, ye ken—I like a walk better. Come now, there's a gude lass, just gang wi' me the day, and I'll take ye doon to the sea whaur ye've never been yet. I'm on my way to ca' for an acquaintance, and we expect to meet some friends on the shore."

"Oh! Janet, I daurna; my father and mother wad never forgie me if they kent o't, and it's no right, Janet, to deceive the mistress."

"Your father and mother 'll never ken anything about it unless you tell them yoursell—and as to it's no being right, I am sure it never did me ony ill—come noo, Nelly."

"I daurna do it, Janet," repeated little Nelly, in a tremulous voice, which showed she had

some difficulty in resisting the temptation ; and looking hastily on every side as she spoke, as if afraid that their conversation might be overheard, “ I tell you I daurna ; it’s no richt, Janet. Besides, the mistress wad be sure to hear o’t.”

“ If that’s a’ your frichted for, Nelly, I’ll sune put ye on a way that she’ll never ken onything about it. We’ll be back in plenty o’ time for the kirk skaling, and I’ll find oot the text for ye ; and if ye hae it, she canna accuse ye o’ no being at the kirk, for I suppose she disna expect ye to mind the discoorse.”

“ Oh ! I daurna—I daurna,” still, but almost mechanically repeated Nelly, in whose bosom a fierce struggle was taking place. Conscience and Inclination were each striving for the mastery. Now Conscience pleaded — “ it is God’s day, Nelly, you have no right to employ it in your own pleasures, and how grieved your father and mother would be if you did so ;

think of their warnings, and of your own promises, Nelly—shun temptation !”

“It is only for once,” pleaded Inclination ; “besides, your mistress is too strict in her notions, and you have never seen the sea ; if you neglect this opportunity, you may never have another. What a pity to waste so fine a day within the walls of a church ! Your father and mother are old-fashioned people, and it is such only that make a work about these things.”

Alas ! Inclination carried the day. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you,” saith the Scriptures. If Nelly had responded to the first dictates of conscience, and not stood hesitating and considering, she would have overcome the temptation. She yielded to it, knowing that she was doing what was wrong ; and by so acting fully justified the opinion her penetrating mistress had formed of her character.

Janet’s “acquaintance” lived with a family

in Clarence-street, which was close at hand. She was ready when they rang the area-bell. Nelly was introduced, and away they started in the direction of Granton.

Nelly was most unhappy during the walk; a feeling of guilt oppressed her, which the high spirits and gossip of her companions could not dissipate. She thought of the church at Winstraelea, of her father and mother and brother in the old familiar pew, and of the distress the knowledge of her conduct would occasion them. She wished the temptation had not been thrown in her way—that she had not met Janet that morning.

She took little or no interest in the objects her companions pointed out to her. The sun shone gloriously; the trees and fields were fresh and green; scarcely a summer cloudlet obscured the sky; but Nelly feared to lift her eyes to the blue heavens above, for she felt as if God's eye was looking down upon her from thence, and

that it was the eye of a severe and angry judge. Even the first view of the wide Firth, heaving and glittering in the sunshine, with the vessels moored in Sabbath quietness by the quays—the opposite green coast studded with villas and farm-houses, had only the effect of distracting these thoughts for a moment.

At length they reached the shore and sauntered slowly along it. It was ebb tide, and when they were weary of walking, they left the road and seated themselves on the rocks which strewn the beach. They had not sat long here, when they were joined by Janet's "friends," two young and showily dressed men. Nelly thought they were gentlemen, and Janet informed her in a whisper, that both were clerks in a Writer to the Signet's office in town, and were occasionally in the habit of visiting in the Moray Place kitchen. She was evidently on very familiar terms with them, and much giggling ensued between herself and friend as they approached. Nelly was so

surprised and startled by all this, and by Janet's manner of accosting them, that her thoughts became gradually diverted from herself. Her curiosity was roused — not that she had any suspicions of Janet's virtue, but she could not help wondering where, and how she had become acquainted with the young men.

They were both good-looking, had both a smart, jaunty sort of air, and wore a profusion of jewellery in the form of watch-guards, breast-pins and rings. Nelly was dazzled, and thought she had never seen a couple of finer gentlemen. She was, however, embarrassed and uneasy in their company, and when one of them after some lively, if not refined *badinage* with her companions, addressed himself to her, she scarcely knew how to answer him. Her blushes, and brief and hesitating replies, did not deter him from seeking to improve her acquaintance. He sat himself down by her, and commenced a vigorous complimentary

assault, while his companion directed his attentions to Janet and her friend. Nelly was not long proof against this. Her timidity and reserve gradually yielded as her vanity was roused, and ere long she was laughing and coquetting with the same freedom, as if the "gentleman" had been Tam Drummond, or any other of her old sweethearts.

Poor foolish Nelly ! her uneasiness and upbraidings also lessened. She no longer felt guilty and unhappy—or if she did, it was in a very slight degree. Now she began to look around her, to admire the sea, the white sandy beach, the little islets that speckled the Firth, the distant view, and the shipping. The fresh breeze from the water exhilarated her spirits ; and ere long she was able to join with only a slight feeling of compunction in the laugh, which Janet's description of her escape from her usual Sunday restraint awakened. Nay more, she began to feel somewhat ashamed

of the strict and religious notions in which she had been trained, and to be afraid lest her new friends might despise her for them; and she anxiously endeavoured to persuade them that she herself had never been influenced by such old-fashioned opinions. And she doubtless succeeded.

She now heard what convinced her that all that Janet had told her was truth. The young men not only alluded to their visits in Moray Place, but had many amusing incidents to tell of risks of detection they had run in different families—how they had been hidden in cupboards, and stowed away in cellars, when the mistress of the household presumed to pay a late and unexpected visit to her lower domains.

Nelly laughed like her companions at these stories, but she could not applaud them as they did. Indeed, they rather shocked and frightened her, and she could not help picturing to

herself the scene that must have ensued if discovery had taken place. "I wonder how servants can risk their characters sae," was her secret comment ; " I'm sure it's a' they hae to depend on."

"What's that you're thinking about?" said Mr. Shephard, the young man who sat beside her, observing that her face had suddenly become grave and thoughtful.

Nelly at first refused to confess ; but they all insisted upon knowing, so at last blushing and reluctant, for she was afraid of ridicule, she told it.

"There's little chance of being found out, if one has their wits about them," said Janet. "I hae been in mony families, and ne'er a mistress I had was the wiser o' onything that went on down the stair."

"I was caught once," said one of the young men, with a chuckle at the recollection. "You remember the Edgars, Shephard—you

knew them as well as I—Edgar of Broughton Place. Well, I was visiting the cook one night, and was sitting snugly in the corner of a clothes-screen—it was a lucky screen for me—when down comes one of the misses into the kitchen. I believe she had list on her shoes, for neither the girl nor I heard her till she was at the door, and there I saw who it was by peeping between two of her own petticoats, that were hanging on the screen behind me. It would never have done to have been seen there, so just on the spur of the moment I started up, put my head between my legs, and stared boldly at her, face upside down. I wish you had heard the yell she gave, and seen her bolt out of the kitchen and up the stairs, as if a wild beast had been at her heels. I can tell you I was not long of following her example, though in a different direction.”

“Ha, ha, ha !” shouted all but Nelly.

“But what became of the servant, Sir?” she at length ventured to ask.

“Why, I—I rather believe they turned her away,” he answered with some hesitation. “But I met the old lady in the street the following week; and would you believe it, when I asked for the young ladies, she gave me a full and particular account of the fright Miss had got, which it seems had brought on a fit of palpitation of the heart. And there was I listening with the gravest face and agreeing with all she said about the low state of morality among the young men of the present day. Ha, ha, ha! it was a rich joke!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” again responded the others.

Some other interesting anecdotes of a similar nature were contributed by Mr. Shephard, proving without a doubt the truth of Mrs. Edgar’s assertion, in so far at least as regarded himself and friend. And Nelly’s thoughts were

so engrossed by what she heard, that she quite forgot all about church and Mrs. Elliot, and was only reminded that it was time for her to retrace her steps, if she wished to avoid discovery, by seeing one of the young men look at his watch.

They all accompanied her back; and they were obliged to make haste, to reach town before the dismissal of Nelly's congregation. Janet informed her friends of the necessity for Nelly's ascertaining the text which had been preached from, and this again occasioned much merriment, in which she joined, though her conscience pricked her. Mr. Shephard walked, as he had sat, by her side, and seemed rapidly progressing into the lover. Nelly leant on his arm, all her old coquetry revived by the attentions of so fine a young man—quite a gentleman in short. And now for the first time she began to experience that a town was a delightful place.

They reached the church in time for their purpose. The congregation were just dispersing ; and Janet found no difficulty in procuring the text from one of the pew-openers, on the pretext that she had forgot it. Nelly marked it carefully in her Bible—the Bible her father had given her when she left her home. Perhaps some remembrance of the words which accompanied the gift recurred to her mind as she did it, for she did not feel so happy as before. But again her companions talk dissipated the impression. They parted from her at the corner of Danube Street.

Mr. Shephard hinted his intention of ere long visiting her, but was mortified by the information given by both Nelly and Janet, that he must not attempt it. The latter person however, assured him that he would have opportunities of meeting her in Moray Place. And so, after expressing a hope that

she would be able to join them on some future Sabbath, they all shook hands cordially with her and separated.

It was with the feelings of a criminal that Nelly approached her mistress's house. She felt her heart sinking within her. She dreaded to meet Mrs. Elliot's mild but penetrating eye—or even Martha's—she was so certain her countenance would betray her. She looked carefully at the text, and, with a trembling hand, rang the bell. Martha opened the door, but her mind was so engrossed with her mistress's state, that she did not observe Nelly's flurried look and changing colour. At another time they would not have escaped her, for Martha was a shrewd and observant woman. Mrs. Elliot had been very ill during Nelly's absence, the doctor had been sent for, and was now with her. This information relieved Nelly's apprehensions, and when Martha hurried back to her mistress's room, she

went down stairs with a tolerably lightened heart.

Mrs. Elliot was not dangerously ill, though she had suffered much pain during the morning, and was now much exhausted. Nelly was glad to hear this from Martha, who gave her permission to return to church in the afternoon. She went there, and went with the determination of atoning for her late fault, by paying an undeviating attention to the service. But the manner in which she had spent the early portion of the Sabbath, was not calculated to promote a sober and devotional frame of mind. Her thoughts were constantly wandering, and when she left the church it was with a memory entirely unimpressed by what she had seemed to listen to. But she *had* been there, and this quieted her conscience.

Unfortunately for Nelly, Mrs. Elliot never discovered the fault of which she had been

guilty. Some days elapsed before that lady was able to leave her room, and she was nursed there by her daughter and Martha. Her dread of discovery being removed, Nelly soon ceased to care about the matter, especially as she had seen Janet, and learned from her that Mr. Shephard had been expressing himself very highly in her praise.

CHAPTER VII.

NELLY gradually grew less attentive to her duties—Martha had great cause of complaint. The girl's thoughts were almost always in Moray Place. Her visits there did her much harm. They kept her in constant excitement, and disgusted her with the quiet way of living in Danube Street. Mrs. Elliot did not often permit her to visit Janet, but Nelly was not to be restrained. When sent on an errand, there was no guessing now when she would return ; and she became an adept in making excuses. Martha lost all confidence in her, and Mrs.

Elliot was seriously grieved by numerous derelictions from truth—none of them, indeed, on any matter of importance, but yet showing the change the girl's character was undergoing. Giddy and volatile though she ever was, she had once had a great regard for truth.

Her mistress again and again expostulated with her, pointing out the evil of the habits she was forming, and for an hour thereafter Nelly would be all penitence and good resolutions; but, alas! they proved like the morning cloud and the early dew—there was no retaining them. They could not withstand Janet's laugh, or Mr. Shephard's expostulations—that gentleman making a point of visiting his friends in Moray Place every evening that Nelly was expected there.

Strange things Nelly saw in Moray Place—but they seemed less so every time she visited it. Early impressions were growing weaker and weaker—faults which would once have startled

her, were now diminishing into trifles not worth thinking about. To impose upon a mistress, seemed now rather a clever and commendable action. She no longer considered what her father and mother would think of this or that circumstance, but what Mr. Shephard and her friends in Mr. Maxwell Grey's would decide about it. They regulated her opinions. Even her attachment to Miss Elliot was cooling. At least she no longer confided in her—how could she, when she had so much to conceal?

Mrs. Elliot began seriously to regret having brought Nelly from the country. Martha had accidentally learned of her intimacy with Mr. Shephard, and had informed her mistress of it. That lady hoped to persuade her to return home at the ensuing term.

But to return to the country was far from Nelly's intention. She still loved her parents, and wrote to them constantly, without thinking it necessary, however, to mention certain recent

passages in her history ; but she was now accustomed to be separated from them. The idea of service in the country at least, in such families as lived in her native place, was insupportable to her. Nelly was quickly learning to look with scorn on all houses where only two maids were kept. She wondered now how she could ever have thought it a great thing to be engaged as a servant by Miss Archer, or that she could once have looked with envy on the servants at the manse, whom she now regarded as a couple of slaves. She, at least, was determined to "better herself;" and to do so without consulting her parents, who she feared might insist upon her returning home.

"But after a', they'll no do that," thought Nelly, shrewdly ; "for I maun win my bread whaurever I am ; and unless some really gude place was to cast up at hame, and that's no likely, I'm better here. But I wad like just

to see them again, though I dinna think that'll be in my power."

And Nelly's heart at that moment did yearn after home with something of old freshness; and she would willingly have devoted a considerable portion of her wages to pay her expenses to Winstraelea and back.

"I will send them a' something at this term time, however," she resolved; "a silk neck-tie to my father, and something to my mother, puir body, and Jamie, and that'll show that I haena forgot them."

And she fell into a kind of reverie about home; a thing of which she had not been very guilty of late. "Hech, Sirs! I wonder if Tam Drummond ever thinks about me noo, or if onybody gangs after the new lass at Archers," was the conclusion.

But another's image soon displaced that of her old sweetheart, who, poor fellow,

thought of her oftener than she merited from him.

Nelly cried a great deal and protested her innocence, when Mrs. Elliot kindly but seriously took her to task about Mr. Shephard. But she did not deceive her mistress.

"I fear you are not telling me the truth Nelly," she said, gravely.

Nelly coloured deeply and remained silent, playing with the string of her apron.

"You are a stranger to town, Nelly," resumed her mistress, "and can be little aware of the snares and dangers that surround you in it. I fear, my poor girl, that that friend of yours is not a safe companion. Was it through her that you became acquainted with this young man?"

Nelly still continued silent.

"He is your superior in station, Nelly; and can mean you nothing good. I am told he has been seen several times in your company.

Think how grieved your parents would be if they knew of it."

Nelly now lifted her apron to her eyes, and sobbed bitterly.

"I am glad that this thought distresses you," said Mrs. Elliot, gently; "and I hope the wish not to pain your friends will induce you instantly to drop this unseemly acquaintance. I believe you have been led into it by thoughtlessness and vanity. But now that I warn you of its impropriety, and even danger, if you persist, I cannot retain you in my service longer than to the next term."

Nelly continued to weep, and still she returned no answer to Mrs. Elliot, who having finished all she had to say, gave her leave to withdraw. She hoped she had made an impression upon her; but she was not sanguine about it. Contradictory feelings indeed filled Nelly's breast. Shame at being thus reproved by one like Mrs. Elliot, a little suspicion

of her lover, for so I suppose he must be called, but which she tried to think was groundless, succeeded each other. But above all, there reigned anger against Martha, or the person who had been Mrs. Elliot's informant; and she went down to the kitchen feeling injured and sulky. This was not lessened by reflection. Her conscience was less tender than it used to be, and she was less grateful for any interest shown in her. She was piqued, too, by the threat her mistress held out.

"She needna talk that way," she thought. "I wadna stay in her place, though she asked me on her bendit knees."

Ah! Nelly could indeed afford to be so dignified; for Mrs. Maxwell Grey was really in quest of a servant such as Janet described, and she had strong expectations of being selected. The cook and Janet had already recommended her; and Mrs. Maxwell Grey had almost promised to inquire "her character." What her father

and mother might think of the change, she did not trouble herself about. When she had made it, she would write and let them know. At present, Mrs. Maxwell Grey's family were in the country, and Janet was left in charge of their town house.

Mrs. Elliot had little opportunity of observing Nelly's conduct for some weeks; her health was indifferent; and George had arrived in Danube Street. He had said farewell to his parents, and was to proceed direct to London when he left Edinburgh. It was a happy but agitating time for Mary, that he spent with them. Although he had already crossed the Atlantic twice, she had all a woman's anxieties and presentiments about the voyage, and though he laughed at them, he could not succeed in banishing them. He brought her a pressing reminder from his mother of her promise to visit Craiglee at Christmas.

"I will picture you with them, Mary," he

said tenderly the last evening he was in Edinburgh; "when I am eating my Christmas-dinner with old Mr. Masson, I shall see you all in imagination seated round the fire-side at home. Next Christmas, Mary, I hope we will all be together at Craiglee."

Mary smiled; but there were tears in her eyes. It was very delightful to look forward to such a time, to think of the happy family circle that might then be assembled round the great Christmas fire in her dear old country home. But ah! how many things might happen in the interval to prevent the vision being realized. She did not say this, however, to George.

"How you and Aunt Bess will enjoy long walks on the frosty days," he continued, endeavouring to speak cheerfully. "I shall then be broiling in the counting-house, and envying you. Poor Aunt Bess—I hope she has got

up her spirits by this time—she was very downcast when I left.”

“Poor Aunt Bess!” said Mary, with sympathy. She knew what parting with a beloved object was.

“My father and mother bore it better,” said George, “but Aunt Bess was always the most tender-hearted of souls. When I went away formerly, she did not recover her cheerfulness for weeks. You must cheer them all for my sake, Mary.”

“And who is to cheer me?” said Mary, blushing and smiling. But we will not record the lover’s answer.

He left, and seemed to Mary to carry the sunshine with him. Her heart was heavy and oppressed, but a sense of duty prevailed over the inclination to indulge in solitary musings and despondency. She struggled with her feelings, and in a few days appeared her own gentle, cheerful self again. Perhaps a letter

from George, dated London, and written on the eve of embarking, assisted her in her endeavours.

After this, they went down to Trinity for a few weeks, that Mrs. Elliot might have the benefit of sea air. Both servants accompanied them. There Nelly was more steady and attentive, and Mrs. Elliot was better pleased with her. She little thought that the girl's improvement was owing to a regard for her own interests, the season for engaging servants for the following half-year drawing near. Nelly was anxious to earn a good "character," that she might obtain Mrs. Maxwell Grey's situation. She was growing too seriously attached to the young clerk, to believe anything to his disadvantage. Mrs. Elliot's warning had made no impression upon her. What their intimacy was to lead to, she scarcely considered; she enjoyed the present, and that was sufficient for her.

The Maxwell Greys and Elliots returned to town about the same time, the beginning of September. Mr. Maxwell Grey was poorly, and wished to get to Edinburgh for advice. The country practitioner did not understand his own interest. He merely recommended exercise, simple diet, and regularity to his patient; so Mr. Maxwell Grey decided that Dr. Struthers knew nothing of his ailments.

A few days after her return, Mrs. Maxwell Grey drove to Danube Street. Nelly had been warned by Janet to expect her, but she had not had courage to inform Mrs. Elliot that she intended leaving her service. Mrs. Elliot was therefore much surprised when that lady was ushered into the drawing-room, and still more so when she learnt her errand. She had no idea that Nelly was in search of another situation. Indeed she had been intending that very day to advise her return to the country. There was a degree of duplicity in the girl's

conduct which pained Mrs. Elliot, and between this feeling and the suddenness of the thing, she had some difficulty in collecting her thoughts so as to answer Mrs. Maxwell Grey's queries. That lady, however, did not appear to remark Mrs. Elliot's uneasiness. She evidently took it for granted that her visit was expected, and introduced the subject without preface, and in rather a hurried manner.

"Was the girl honest, obliging, neat in her person? could she work well with her needle, and was she capable of waiting on young ladies?"

These questions were easily answered in the affirmative, for Nelly had considerable taste in dress, and was always anxious to assist at her young lady's toilette. Mrs. Maxwell Grey therefore rose to go, but was prevented by Mrs. Elliot.

"I will not detain you more than a few minutes," she said, inviting her to resume her

seat, which the lady did rather unwillingly, hinting something about an important engagement.

"May I inquire, ma'am," asked Mrs. Elliot of her impatient visitor, "how long it is since my servant applied for your situation?"

"Why, I cannot recollect exactly," said the lady; "but it is a considerable time since some of my servants, with whom it appears she is acquainted, recommended her to me. Why do you ask?"

"Because I was not aware of the circumstance till now," replied Mrs. Elliot, "and it has a little surprised me. ("Evidently irritated on account of her servant leaving her," thought the visitor). "But perhaps she may have consulted her parents on the subject."

"Why that I can't tell, and should think of little consequence if she is to enter my service," replied Mrs. Maxwell Grey with some *hauteur*.

"But you know nothing prejudicial to the young woman's character, I suppose?"

"She has many good qualities, but I think her rather giddy and fond of admiration," said Mrs. Elliot, who was scrupulously truthful in affairs of this kind, as she led her servants to expect she would be. Ladies, unhappily, are seldom so—they hold a little concealment allowable to benefit a servant ; or has it its origin in cowardice?

Mrs. Elliot added, "She will require to be checked for these faults occasionally, and a little kindly advice from her mistress may do her much good."

"Oh! as to that," said Mrs. Maxwell Grey, rising hastily, "my servants must just take care of themselves. I have neither time nor inclination for anything of that kind. All young women are more or less vain. Good morning, ladies."

And Mrs. Maxwell Grey swept with her

rustling silks out of the room, leaving mother and daughter to regard each other with very grave and anxious looks.

“One of the ‘very goods,’ evidently,” thought Mrs. Maxwell Grey, contemptuously, as she descended the staircase. Nelly was in the lobby, anxiously waiting to learn her fortune.

“The girl is good-looking, and I suppose knows it—no such mighty fault after all,” was the lady’s reflection, as she advanced towards her. She paused for a few moments to mention what her duties were to be, and to engage her, and then hurried out to the carriage, leaving Nelly with a joyful heart.

The latter was gazing after the carriage with great admiration, when her mistress’s bell rang. The sound damped her rejoicing. Never had Nelly been so reluctant to obey a summons. She knew she had behaved ungratefully and deceitfully towards her mistress, and she felt

ashamed to present herself before her. A lecture she feared was in store for her.

But Mrs. Elliot did not lecture her—the time for that was past. She was deeply grieved, and she told Nelly so, who cried as she listened, though she did not repent of the step she had taken. Nelly was guilty of an untruth, for she assured her mistress that her parents knew of her intention. As they approved of it, Mrs. Elliot could say nothing further, though she had strong objections to a girl so volatile as Nelly entering Mrs. Maxwell Grey's service. She resolved, however, to inform Miss Archer of Nelly's intimacy with Mr. Shephard, hoping her parents would remonstrate with her.

Nelly pacified her conscience by writing home that evening about her new engagement, which she painted in the most brilliant colours. The reason she gave for leaving Mrs. Elliot was, that she found herself uncomfortable with her fellow-servant. Her parents, she knew, would easily

believe this, as she had often complained in her letters of Martha.

“It was just a white lie I telt the mistress,” murmured Nelly, as she wafered her missive, “for I am sure my father and mother wad never hinder me bettering mysell; and if I hadna telt them then, I hae done it now, and that’s only four hours after.”

Her parents, however, were not satisfied with the step. They were sorry she had been tempted to leave so excellent a mistress as Mrs. Elliot. High wages were nothing to a sober, quiet, and religious home. This they wrote to her, but of course the deed was done, and could not be repaired. Mrs. Elliot’s hint to Miss Archer alarmed them, and they commanded their daughter to break off all intercourse with Mr. Shephard. She promised to do this, but alas! alas! without either the wish or the intention of keeping her word. She was angry

with Mrs. Elliot for informing against her, and equally wilful and thoughtless, would see neither danger nor impropriety in such an intimacy.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE "term" at length arrived, and Nelly went to her new situation. Before she left Danube Street, Mrs. Elliot gave her much good advice, which, for the time, produced a strong effect on that wayward but impressionable young person. She thought Mrs. Elliot a "saint for goodness," and promised again and again that she would not forget her warnings or allow anything to tempt her to neglect her duty. She, moreover, humbly begged Mrs. Elliot's forgiveness for all the faults she had been guilty of. Her heart warmed even towards

Martha, and she felt a strange kind of regret that they were no longer to be fellow-servants. Miss Elliot, too, who had been so kind to her—Nelly wondered how she could have had the heart to leave her. Mary, who had always felt an interest in her, and now regretted her departure more than any one else, bestowed a parting gift on her, which Nelly vowed she would preserve for ever in remembrance of her dear young mistress.

It was with many tears and real grief that Nelly bade them all farewell, but by the time she reached Moray Place, she felt resigned. She was welcomed by her new fellows—who were not changing their situations—with great heartiness, and they drank her health at night in the kitchen with due honour—Mr. Simpson, the gentleman out of livery, proposing it, and the coachman volunteering to return thanks. They had a few friends with them, and they “kept it up”

pretty late. Nelly, when she went to bed, had pleasanter things to think of than the parting with the family in Danube Street.

Mr. Maxwell Grey was a man of property, and sheriff of his own county. He was, as Janet said, possessed of some ability, and might have made a good figure in society if he had not been completely overshadowed by his wife. But he seemed resigned to his fate—and he was an hypochondriac. Mrs. Maxwell Grey was a woman of much pretension. She was a loud talker, a setter-up and putter-down both of things and people, though nothing could be more shallow than her mind; obsequious and pliant to the great, authoritative and domineering among her equals, and haughty and contemptuous towards her inferiors. She was a woman of the world, as she boasted with reason; but the world would not have greatly missed her.

Mrs. Maxwell Grey would have felt angry and injured if any one had hinted that she was remiss in fulfilling any of her duties. Nay, she considered herself a most exemplary member of society. She attended church at least once every Sunday, and always on the sacramental fasts, and she occasionally gave money for religious and charitable purposes. But then she was no fanatic, she would say; she liked society, and she saw no harm in the amusements that others decried. She liked to be tolerant in all things—she did not set herself up for a saint—for her part, she thought those who did were no better than hypocrites.

Once a year she invited her clergymen in town and country to dinner, and paid them marked attention. And so, with a comfortable reliance on getting to heaven, on account of her church-going and her

alms-giving, Mrs. Maxwell Grey spent six nights out of seven in dissipation.

Her servants followed the example of their mistress, and were equally fond of company. Mrs. Maxwell Grey's kitchen was familiar to half the "fast" young clerks in town. Nay, sometimes the young gentlemen who had waltzed and flirted with the ladies of the family one evening had no objection to a game of romps with the maids the next. Of course Mrs. Maxwell Grey knew nothing of this. She paid high wages, and had experienced servants. They gave her little trouble, which she attributed to her own excellent management and dignified conduct. To converse with or show any particular interest in her servants tended, she believed, to induce carelessness and familiarity—a most unfounded idea—as every earnest-minded, large-hearted mistress has found. Such women know that they have a duty to discharge to

those whom Providence has placed under their rule and within their influence. We believe that much of the immorality abounding in the class of domestic servants at the present day, may be traced to the slight sense of their responsibilities entertained by heads of households.

“Why, my servants know as well as I do that such and such behaviour is wrong,” Mrs. Maxwell Grey would have said if the duty had been pressed upon her. “Why then should I take so much trouble?”

“I do so in obedience to my Master’s injunctions,” Mrs. Elliot would have replied, “and out of love for their souls.” And Mrs. Elliot, who for many years had been the mistress of as large an establishment as Mrs. Maxwell Grey’s, had always been beloved and respected by her servants, which that lady never was.

Indeed, most of them imposed upon her

shamefully. They knew they could do it with impunity, for her time was too much occupied to discover their malpractices. Her tradespeople were honest, but almost every article they supplied paid toll to the servants. Old Leezie the bowlwoman was a constant visitor of theirs. Leezie's basket and well-patched cloak were most convenient receptacles for all kinds of household stuff, empty bottles, &c. Twice a week she was sure to call, not stealing cautiously down the area steps as formerly in Danube Street, but with a familiar and deliberate tread, as if she knew she was welcome.

Once a day, and punctually at the same hour, did Mrs. Maxwell Grey descend her kitchen stairs, inspect her larder, and give her orders, after which she retired with dignity to her own apartments. This over, her servants enjoyed full liberty.

They got out on alternate Sabbaths, and had

the privilege of spending the whole day abroad if they chose. Where some of them spent the evenings we decline mentioning. But we affirm it to be a sad and startling fact, and one that deserves the notice of the heads of families, that the greater proportion of those poor lost outcasts who nightly haunt our streets, can trace their fall into vicious habits to the liberty allowed them of attending Sabbath evening sermons, or of visiting their friends on that night. But Mrs. Maxwell Grey found it much more convenient to spare her servants on Sundays than other days. She kept little company on that day, having a great regard for appearances.

Her house, of course, was very popular amongst a certain class of servants. When a vacancy occurred in the establishment, there was quite a rush made to secure it. But woe to those families into which her domestics entered! They carried, as it were, the plague

with them, and by their example and discourse soon corrupted their new fellows.

Mrs. Maxwell Grey had, however, one upright, respectable servant in her family—the nursery-maid. This woman was disliked and dreaded by her fellows, because she would neither share in their pleasures nor speculations. They would willingly have undermined her in her mistress’s opinion, but that lady, although she took little interest in her servants’ welfare, would not condescend to listen to their insinuations against each other. And she certainly acted rightly in this instance. Besides, Mrs. Maxwell Grey had penetration sufficient to discover Malcolm’s good qualities under the sour and disagreeable rind which enclosed them. She knew her to be a valuable servant, steady and trustworthy, and warmly attached to her charge. This was of great consequence to a mother who did not give much of her time to her children, at least to the

younger ones. To those who were "out," as it is called, it must be allowed she devoted all her energies.

Malcolm was an elderly woman, somewhat grim and forbidding in aspect, but they judged her wrongly who thought her unkindly in heart. Many a night did Malcolm watch unmurmuringly over her little charge, fretful and restless under some of the numerous ailments of infancy, while the mother depending entirely upon her, and selfish about her own comfort, slept undisturbed till morning. On such occasions, Malcolm's great rough hands were tender and gentle as an infant's, her usually heavy tread became noiseless, and her voice, which in general was somewhat coarse and deep, was softened to a lulling whisper. Ay, Malcolm, there was a deep spring of tenderness and a true woman's nature within that ungainly, masculine form of yours !

Malcolm had her faults, however. She had a high opinion of her own merits, which she was apt to think too little appreciated by her mistress. She was of a jealous, suspicious temper, and sometimes took "sulks." And though she would not allow any one else to blame the children, she would occasionally scold them heartily herself, though she was sure to repent of it afterwards.

There was a considerable amount of penetration in her character. She saw something, and guessed the rest of what took place down stairs; but, like many of her class, she dreaded the name of tale-bearer, and except an occasional hint to her mistress, which from its ambiguity was never understood, she preserved silence. Fortunately, she seldom required to visit the kitchens, where she certainly was never welcome, and therefore was not pained by daily witnessing what she could not approve. It was not comfortable, however, to be on such

terms with her fellow-servants, and Malcolm would have resigned her situation, but she could not bear to leave the young people, all of whom, with the exception of the two eldest, she had tended from infancy.

Malcolm was early prejudiced against Nelly. It resulted principally from pique. The nursery had been appointed as the latter's place for working, but that young woman was dissatisfied with the location; and as she recommended herself to her young ladies by her neatness, skill in dress, and obliging manners, she soon procured through them a removal to an apartment on a lower floor. This allowed her greater facilities of stealing down stairs than if she had been under Malcolm's Argus eyes. The kitchen servants had warned her against establishing any friendship with that person on penalty of forfeiting theirs.

"I advise you, Nelly," Janet had said the first evening of her arrival, "to have naething

to say to her if you want to keep in with us. She's a spy, and nane of us can abide her."

Malcolm had expected from the prepossessing manners and appearance of the girl, to secure one companion in the establishment, and she was deeply chagrined and indignant when she went over to the enemy. It soured Malcolm's temper for a long time. She now judged Nelly with great severity, and she determined to observe her conduct narrowly.

No spy so acute and dangerous as an irritated and experienced fellow-servant. Her ear is always open, her step can be rendered inaudible, and she can even dispense with sleep to further her purpose. From the top of the nursery staircase did Malcolm again and again, with grim satisfaction in her own sagacity, watch the unconscious Nelly as she stole down stairs to join the kitchen revels. The latter could not remain above when her stylish lover

might be in the kitchen and expecting to see her. Nay, either one or other of her friends below was pretty certain to summon her if he made his appearance. She was seldom censured for neglecting her work. She was an excellent needlewoman, and by getting up a little earlier in the morning she could easily finish her appointed task.

Malcolm, however, judged Nelly too hardly when she suspected her of participating in the others' dishonest practices. The girl was certainly occasionally witness to acts which she could not approve; but her fellows did not make a confidant of her: Janet knew it would not do. Nothing would have induced Nelly, at least at this period of her history, to cheat her master. She had not as yet, so far progressed in artifice, although her conscience was gradually growing less sensitive. Perhaps, however, she was not sufficiently shocked by what she observed, or perhaps she ought to have dis-

covered it to her mistress ; but the latter was a pitch of conscientiousness beyond Nelly. Besides, her mind at present was entirely engrossed by one feeling, and she dared not offend her fellow-servants for fear they might retaliate in the matter of Mr. Shephard.

Her Sabbath out unfortunately was the same as Janet's. Nelly was now in the constant habit of neglecting church. Her Bible lay disused in her trunk. Her parents and late mistress's warnings were all forgotten. Mr. Shephard scoffed at religion, and though she shrunk from such daring blasphemy, his words entered her mind and poisoned it. His influence over her was daily increasing.

In his company she visited the theatre and other places of public amusement. Once Nelly would have shrunk from the presence of a frequenter of the first-named place. "He attends the theatre," was sufficient to condemn one in the estimation of the grave

dissenting body to which Nelly's parents belonged. She remembered a young man who had left Winstraelea to settle in Glasgow, and how shocked the simple congregation were to hear he had attended the theatre there. It formed a subject of conversation for a week.

Nelly laughed at all this now : she had grown wiser. She contrived to visit it pretty frequently. At first she used to request leave of absence ; but she was soon as unscrupulous as her companions. The ladies had constant evening engagements during the winter, and never returned till late. She was almost secure from discovery except—but Nelly had no suspicion of this—through Malcolm. *She* knew all about it.

Nelly was once fairly caught, however. It was her duty to sit up for the ladies. She miscalculated on this occasion, and they arrived before her. Mrs. Maxwell Grey was extremely angry ; but as this was a *first* offence, she merely bestowed a severe reprimand.

mand on the culprit. Nelly took care always to return in time after this.

Mrs. Elliot had kindly invited her to visit her house when she chose. Nelly did call once or twice, but eventually she dropped the practice. Mrs. Elliot was always giving her advice, which the more she needed, the more she disliked. Nelly was afraid, too, of her penetration, that she might discover that notwithstanding her parents' injunctions, she still continued her intimacy with Mr. Shephard.

She kept up the correspondence with home, but her letters conveyed anything but a just idea of her situation in Mr. Maxwell Grey's. Her parents knew nothing to alarm them; but they anxiously endeavoured to find her a situation for the ensuing half year in their own neighbourhood. They were not successful.

Nelly, however, would have refused to

return. It would have been a final separation from her lover. To her great satisfaction, she was re-engaged by Mrs. Maxwell Grey, as was Janet.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Christmas approached, Mary Elliot departed for Craiglee; Mrs. Elliot had been warmly invited to accompany her, but she feared the journey in that inclement season. Mary regretted leaving her mother alone, but she had promised George and his parents to make the visit. And Craiglee, too, was so beautiful in winter, she longed to see it again at that time of year. Its dark pine woods were as fine as in summer; the wild, little river was in its full glory, and a snow-storm

drifting fiercely down the valley was a majestic sight.

Frosty nights with their glorious starry skies were her delight, and though a quiet little person, she enjoyed extremely a private scamper, in company with the old terrier, down the ice-bound avenue in the mornings.

She was received with open arms by the good folks at Craiglee. They seemed to think they could not make enough of her. As George's future wife she was already considered one of the family, and she immediately dropped into the place and duties of a daughter.

Mrs. Elliot began good-naturedly to congratulate herself on the easy life she would lead in her old days; and ere Mary had been a week in the house, it was invariably to her that the old gentleman had recourse when he wanted his newspaper read to him, or

when his spectacles were mislaid. At first he had apologized with laborious, old-fashioned politeness for troubling her ; but he soon forgot to do this, and accepted these attentions as a matter of course. Mary was delighted to render them, and to find how much her company added to her friends' enjoyment.

There was no society in the neighbourhood this winter, so they were thrown on their own resources for amusement. Almost every family but their own, had migrated to town ; even the Stewarts had gone there this season. But Mary liked the feeling of solitude. The outdoor loneliness made the fireside more cheerful. It was delightful to come back from a long walk, and find a great fire blazing, a warm glow through the whole room, and every one, even the dog on the hearth-rug, ready to welcome her.

Her presence diffused a quiet cheerfulness through the house. Mrs. Elliot felt it no longer

empty and *eerie*. Mary's youthful face and figure flitting along the passages and through the rooms made as it were, "a sunshine in the shady place." The good old folks missed her if she was an hour out of their company. She had a winning manner, and was always ready to sacrifice her own convenience to oblige or entertain them. They wondered how they had got along without her.

"I always said George would choose a sensible wife," the old gentleman repeatedly declared, as if rather proud that his prediction had been a successful one. And Mrs. Elliot and Aunt Bess were equally triumphant in having thought of the match from the first.

Aunt Bess's bag was advancing, but as she did not wish Mary to see it till it was finished and presented to her, she was forced to work at it in her own room, and by snatches—the door being bolted for fear of intrusion.

She had selected the most brilliant pattern in Perth, and the pleasure of copying it was very great. Good Aunt Bess delighted in simple mysteries and little surprises. She was always devising and presenting trifling gifts to her friends. She had a turn for hoarding such things herself—indeed, she had quite a museum of old keepsakes. Some of them had been preserved from childhood—faded, valueless things in themselves, but inestimably precious in Aunt Bess's sight, who was often moved to tears when contemplating them. They were, however, the records of nothing more interesting than friendship for Aunt Bess, (a rare thing for a woman,) had no hesitation in confessing that she had never known what it was to have a lover.

Mary was favoured with a view of some of them one day. It showed what a prodigious favourite she had become with the simple-

hearted, good little spinster, who in general preserved them carefully from every eye—her brother-in-law often good-naturedly ridiculing her propensity for accumulating trash.

She invited Mary into her room, promising to show her some mementoes of her nephew's infancy, and Mary, who of course was interested in everything relating to George, gladly accompanied her.

Aunt Bess seated her in the easiest chair ; she then unlocked with an air of some importance, an old, dilapidated bureau, which quite cumbered one side of her room. But it had belonged to the worthy old clergyman, her father, and when a child she had often played with its brass ornaments and handles. Aunt Bess would not have parted with the old black bureau for the most elegant and commodious piece of modern furniture, shining in all the glory of French polish, in a fashionable upholsterer's ware-room.

Diving into its deepest receptacle, she by degrees brought to light the treasures to which she had alluded. They were all carefully enveloped in silk-paper and labelled. She handed them in turn to Mary, who had been watching her movements with some curiosity.

"My nephew George's first hair," read Mary, demurely.

Well, Mary was interested in looking at that. How fine, and silky, and fair it was ; but how different from the dark wavy locks that now clustered round her lover's well-shaped head ! She would have liked some of it for herself ; but the quantity was very small, and she did not ask it. So she carefully folded it up in its delicate envelope, and returned it to Aunt Bess.

But the article which followed next provoked an involuntary smile, which she however instantly suppressed for fear of hurting her companion's feelings.

"One of my nephew George's first teeth," again read Mary. Such a tiny thing—as white, and no larger than a pearl. It escaped from her fingers, and fell on the carpet. There was an anxious search for it; and, happily, it was recovered, and restored to its place of safety.

"My nephew George's first spelling-book;" in a very dilapidated condition.

"My nephew George's first writing-book;" full of long sprawling strokes and extraordinary hooks, dashed here and there with the usual schoolboy blots in endless variety. Mary thought with inward merriment on her lover seated gravely at his desk in the tropics, while she was examining his early efforts of penmanship.

"George is a beautiful writer now," said Aunt Bess, turning over the leaves with great interest. "Is'nt he, my dear?"

"I think he is; his writing has a great

deal of character in it," said Mary; "but what now is this, dear Aunt Bess?" as another little packet was placed in her hand.

It was a small portion of her nephew's first boyish dress—his first doublet and hose in short.

"It was a present from me, my dear," said his aunt, with eyes in which old memories glistened, as she gazed wistfully upon the small bit of cloth in Mary's hand; "and he looked so well in it. I remember it as if it were yesterday. I dressed him myself without any one knowing; and then led him in to his father and mother, and they were so proud. It's a pretty thing, too, isn't it?"

"A very pretty thing," said Mary, warmly; for she loved and honoured the true affection which had led to these little memorials being preserved.

Aunt Bess was much gratified by her approval.

"Perhaps," she said sily, "ay, who knows but I may live to give George's son his first suit, too—who knows?"

Mary coloured and smiled; and then Aunt Bess, with a nod of great meaning, turned her to the bureau, and took from it another article.

"Now this, my dear," she said impressively, putting it into Mary's hand, but still keeping her own upon it; "this is the most precious thing in the whole collection. I have reserved it for the last, because I mean to give it to you. I know you will value it; but you must let me see it occasionally. Now, open it."

She raised her hand with a smile of great significance; and Mary wondering what this article could be, quickly obeyed her.

It was a small, but well executed miniature

of George. Mary regarded it with pleased surprise, while Aunt Bess watched her with a beaming countenance.

“It is very like,” said Mary.

“Ah! yes,” said Aunt Bess, approaching to peep over her shoulder. “I look at it every day, and it is almost the same as having George before me. He gave me it, dear boy, just before he left us three years ago, and Nancy got another.”

“But it would be very selfish to deprive you of this, Aunt Bess,” said Mary, with her eyes still earnestly fixed upon it.

“Hush, my dear! don’t say a word about it;” patting her tenderly on the cheek. “That is my Christmas present to you. And now, if you like, you can go to your own room and look at it there.”

And to prevent Mary thanking her, she conducted her to the door, still patting her on the shoulder as if she were a favourite child,

and thus dismissed her. How happy Aunt Bess felt all that evening at the sacrifice she had made!

Next day was Christmas, and a happy though quiet Christmas it was at Craiglee. The clergyman of the parish, who was a bachelor, and two old ladies, who lived all the year round in a cottage about two miles distant, were the only guests. Mary knew the latter well, for they were often at Craiglee in her father's time. They were poor, and jealous of attention; so when the carriage which had been sent for them arrived, with its two occupants wrapt up as if for a Lapland winter—there was the slightest sprinkling of snow on the ground—she hurried down stairs to bid them welcome. They were, however, horrified at the sight of her uncovered head and slightly-clad figure, and besought her earnestly to go in doors, else she would get her death of cold.

"Ne'er a bit of her," exclaimed the old minister, who came sturdily up, leaning on his stick, having walked from the manse. "Dinna let them make a fine town leddy of ye, Miss Mary ; ye were aye a country lassie."

Mary laughed. She could have told them that a happy heart is the best safeguard from taking cold in the world. She was spending her Christmas at Craiglee, and, though her mother and George were not there to render her happiness perfect, her bosom was light and buoyant.

It was fine, clear, frosty weather. The snow lay thick and glittering on the lofty mountain tops, but scarcely at all on the hill sides and valley. It was as pleasant to walk among the woods as in summer. The paths were crisp and dry ; showers of pine-leaves had lately fallen upon them, but the frost had bound them firmly together, and they felt as elastic to the foot as a carpet. The woods too were full

of motion and music. Roes, squirrels, hares, and rabbits were constantly darting into sight and then disappearing; blackbirds and the familiar robin in abundance were to be seen; and the waterfalls, that in summer fell in silver threads from rock to rock, had now become important cascades, flashing among the dark pine-stems, and making sweet and soothing melody.

Mary had been wandering among the woods that morning, enjoying all these sights and sounds. In company with Aunt Bess, she had also visited many of her former poor friends in their cottages, whose hearts were cheered by the Christmas bounty Mrs. Elliot dispensed to them through their instrumentality. She had been very happy afterwards in chatting with Mr. and Mrs. Elliot by the fireside about George; and she had more than once visited her own room to gaze upon the miniature—kind Aunt Bess's Christmas gift.

What a pleasant thing a small Christmas party is in a large, comfortable, old-fashioned country house ! The great roaring fire, fed by the mighty Christmas log, was not more cheerful and exhilarating than the happy, good-humoured faces of Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, as they dispensed the good things that covered their board. And, though they often thought of their absent son, they would not suffer it to depress them. The poor old Miss Gibsons, to whom a party was a rarity, enjoyed themselves exceedingly. Every one paid them attention. They were attired in their best, and were certain of being conveyed home comfortably at night. Mr. Balderstone, the clergyman, was in his happiest vein ; he told his drollest stories, and was full of quaint humour the whole evening. Aunt Bess was radiant with smiles, and ready to do little kindnesses for everybody ; and Mary only sighed once when she thought of the great wallowing waters that intervened

between George and his home. He would be thinking of that home at the present time, and thinking, she hoped and believed, of her.

Mrs. Elliot sang—a thing she only did at Christmas to please her husband—a plaintive old Scottish song, that was fashionable in our grandmothers' time; and Mr. Elliot followed with a ballad, called "The Ancient Gentlewoman," which he boasted no one knew but himself. We will, therefore, transcribe it, for the reader's benefit.

THE ANCIENT GENTLEWOMAN.

She was a good old soul as you did ever see ;
Her father was an admiral—a brave old boy was
he,
Who fought upon the salt, salt sea, and many a scar he
bore ;
But he sleeps within the family vault, and he will fight
no more.

She was an ancient gentlewoman, of lineage high and
bold ;

And they said she had a great huge chest fill'd to the
brim with gold ;

In which her rents she did lay by, that were paid most
punctually,

And at her girdle all the day she bore about the key.

And her chambers they were richly deck'd with velvet
and with pall ;

And many a portrait, dark and grim, in armour clad the
wall ;

And lovely ladies, too, attired in silken sheen were
there,

With poodle dogs upon their knees, and powder in their
hair.

And rusty armour hung around, that her great sires had
worn,

Mix'd with the spoils of silvan war, with spear, and
bow, and horn ;

And paved with marble was the hall ; and by the chim-
ney there

She sat, and listen'd to the poor within an oaken
chair.

Her rivers they were fill'd with fish, her pastures
swarm'd with kine,
And in her cellars there was store of old and generous
wine ;
But though she cheer'd her neighbours' hearts, she
drank no other thing—
This good old country gentlewoman—than water from
the spring.

And she kept a table ready spread, by night and eke by
day,
And not a stranger ever thence was fasting sent away :
And her fame went through the country round, and
much beloved was she,
For such an ancient gentlewoman no one did ever
see.

And she had a chapel in her house, and there she went
each day ;
She had an ancient chaplain, too, his hair was silver
gray :
Amidst her household did she kneel, upon the cushioned
floor,
And many a stranger there would pray who ne'er had
prayed before.

She was a stately gentlewoman, of form erect and
proud ;

And though her heart was warm and kind, her voice
was stern and loud :

She leant upon an ebon staff ; her face was long and
thin ;

And many a straggling hair appeared upon her maiden
chin.

And when she paced along the hall, she was a goodly
sight ;

And much the wondering rustics stared, she was so
richly dight ;

For such an hoop and farthingale they ne'er had seen
before ;

And a long train of rustling silk behind her swept the
floor.

God rest that ancient gentlewoman ! for she hath passed
away,

And the old hall where once she ruled is falling to decay :
She sleeps within the neighbouring church, beneath the
chancel floor ;

God rest that ancient gentlewoman ! we'll see her like
no more !

"A worthy woman!" exclaimed Mr. Balderstone, when the song was finished. "There are not many like her left in the land, indeed."

"Well, the world seems growing finer every day," said Mrs. Elliot; "but we have some of the kindly old stock still." And her eyes rested on Mary.

"Ay, Miss Mary was never intended for one of your feckless fine ladies," said Mr. Balderstone, who observed the direction of her glance. "I have known her, as early as six o'clock in the morning, on the top of Knoch—*that's* the high hill immediately above the kirk; and many a time, when a mere bairn, did she gallop on her pony as far as Cauldhame Farm. Do you remember the pease bannocks and sweet milk the gudewife used to give you, Miss Mary?"

"It would be strange, if I did not," said Mary, laughing; "they were so good."

“Hunger makes the best kitchen,” said Mr. Balderstone; “and a ride along the moor there, is a famous thing for the appetite. A month at the Cauldhame would cure the most dyspeptic man that ever lived, I believe.”

“I should not like to try it,” said Mr. Elliot. “Why, it’s the bleakest spot in the kingdom—nothing but bare moor, dark hills, and a dreary, black loch covered with wild fowl; no one but a sportsman could endure it for a week.”

“It’s a canty place, though, for all that,” replied the clergyman, “and a comfortable farm-stead; and what can be finer than that mountain torrent, sweeping among the hills? I have sat on one of the grey stones, and watched it for an hour at a time. Talk of the Thames at Richmond!” and he snapped his fingers with great contempt.

“I wish the cockneys heard you,” said the

old gentleman, much amused. "But come—a song, a song. 'Tis your turn now, Mr. Balderstone."

"I never sang anything but David's Psalms in my life," replied the clergyman, "and I'm nae great hand at them; but I've something here that may do as well; at least, it will please Miss Mary there, who used to have a great turn for poetry. Ay, you needna shake your head, Miss Mary. When you used to get your lesson at my knee, you always were cleverest when there was some rhyme in it."

As he spoke, he fumbled in his pocket, and finally extracted from it an old worn scrap-book. He selected a paper from it, and handing it to Mary, requested her to read it aloud for the benefit of the company.

"It was sent to me last summer by a friend of mine, who occasionally dabbles in poetry," he said. "I found it this morning mixed up

with some of my papers. Get on, Miss Mary ; and remember, you are reading before your old master. Speak distinctly, and don't blunder."

He had been Mary's tutor at one time, and she smiled at this allusion to old days. The poem was called :—

A DIRGE.

Slowly, heavily falls the rain
On the silent grass below ;
Let me rub the window-pane,
And the state of matters know :
I look out, but nothing see,
Save plashing lawn and dripping tree.
Heigh-ho ! heigh-ho !

On the lawn there is a seat ;
Yesterday I lingered there ;
Softest turf beneath my feet,
Dewy odours in the air ;
All around was sweet and bright ;
Now I shiver at the sight.
Heigh-ho ! heigh-ho !

Yesterday each little bird
 Warbled in the greenwood shade ;
And my inmost soul was stirr'd
 With the melody they made :
Now the kettle sings alone,
Till I hate its drowsy tone.
 Heigh-ho ! heigh-ho !

Yesterday the sun shone bright,
 Summer breezes waved the boughs,
And a murmur of delight
 From the earth to heaven arose :
I hear now but shuddering leaves,
And the droppings from the eaves.
 Heigh-ho ! heigh-ho !

Winding down the misty road,
 Sluggish carts come slowly on ;
And two green umbrellas nod
 O'er the wall—and now they're gone.
On the walk there sounds a tread—
'Tis but the baker with the bread.
 Heigh-ho ! heigh-ho !

Now a drooping sparrow hops
From her nest within the shed ;
She must fill her children's crops
Ere she tucks them into bed ;
And she hastens through the rain,
Wishing she were back again.
Heigh-ho ! heigh-ho !

Wearily, slowly pass the hours ;
Hill and vale are wrapt in gray ;
I could wish for smarter showers,
Even a thunderstorm to day :
'Tis enough to make one sick,
Just to hear that clock *tick, tick* !
Heigh-ho ! heigh-ho !

If the children would but sport,
Or the cook begin to scold ;
But 'tis lesson time, in short,
And the latter has a cold :
All against me must conspire—
Come, close the shutters, mend the fire !
Heigh-ho ! heigh-ho !

The gentlemen accompanied the ladies to the drawing-room immediately after the poem had been read, and its merits discussed. There they all formed a circle round the fire. Their conversation gradually took a serious form, for no one could forget that the only son of the family was far away ; and though Christmas be a season of festivity, it is also one of earnest thought, and solemn, trembling foreboding.

“ Hope always, and pray always,” said the good clergyman, who after some talk about George, saw that more than one heart was full, “and speaking about that, I will tell you a story which will illustrate my meaning.”

They all listened attentively, while Mr. Balderstone related the simple sketch which will be found in the following chapter.

CHAPTER X.

THE MUIRLAND FARM.

AT the distance of three miles from my father's manse, and on the other side of the hills," said Mr. Balderstone, "lay a lone farmhouse. It was a very poor dwelling of the kind; and all around the doors was rough and wild, as if the inmates had too hard a struggle for daily bread to care much about appearances. Nature too had put on her most unkindly aspect there. It was a bare, cold region; its only striking characteristic,

that of extreme and chilling solitude. The farm-offices were mere sheds, built of unhewn stones without cement. The small garden behind the house contained only a few straggling, neglected currant and gooseberry bushes, in addition to kail. There may have been a solitary rose-tree, and a few tufts of daisies besides ; but if so, they bloomed unheeded by the inhabitants. The small, brown, muir-land birds that twittered about the little homestead alone shook the summer raindrops from their slender sprays.

Three small fields formed the farm ; and it required hard labour to make them productive, for the soil was cold and unkindly. They were originally part of the moss, which stretched far and wide around, without a tree or any object save an occasional huge gray stone half sunk in the earth, to relieve the weary eye. A range of low barren hills was its upper boundary ; and at the foot of one of

these, and sheltered by it, the farm-house stood. No view could have been tamer or more desolate than that from the cottage door—first, a small, unenclosed patch of cultivated land, bearing in autumn a stunted crop of barley and oats, that seemed as if it contended with the heath for the possession of the soil; and beyond, a bare, naked waste, through which the rude, half-formed road wound like a serpent. To a stranger's eye, nothing could be more depressing and cheerless; yet it is likely that the dwellers on that spot never felt it so, for they had lived there, father and son, for upwards of seventy years.

The very sunshine scarcely lent an air of cheerfulness to Muirend. It rather brought out in stronger relief the dark rough walls of the cottage, its low mossy roof nearly of a colour with the stunted vegetation around, and its neglected homely environs. How, then, must it have looked in winter, when hill, and

moor, and dwelling-house lay silently beneath a covering of snow; or, worse still, when a thick cold misty rain swept ceaselessly down from the hills and along the black, shivering, half-obsured waste, which every living thing seemed then to have deserted in disgust!

And then the stillness there at all times! It was really startling when a bird suddenly whistled near one, or when the wind sighed among the tall rushes that grew plentifully in the moss. The road was a bye one, leading only to the farm, and seldom trodden by any but its inhabitants.

Those were three individuals—John Telfer the farmer, his wife, and their idiot son. John was a quiet, sober, hard-working man; and truly, so he required to be, for he had no one to assist him in the cultivation of his little farm, and he was getting up in years. There was a shade of severity in his aspect, not surprising to those who knew his narrow cir-

cumstances, and the painful trial with which Providence had seen fit to visit him. From one year's end to another, John Telfer had not a leisure day, save the weekly one which God himself mercifully appointed; when, arrayed in the decent black coat he had worn every Sabbath for thirty years, and accompanied by his equally industrious wife, he left his little moorland dwelling, and crossed the hills to worship in my father's kirk. A respectable poor pair they were; and as they wended their way silently side by side, many an eye followed them, and many a pitying heart said, "God bless them!"

The profits of the farm did not suffice for the frugal maintenance of the little family. John was often forced to work for the more considerable farmers in the parish to make up his rent, casting their peats in the moss and carting them home; and they were glad to employ him, for, though a poor and, perhaps,

soured man, he was universally respected. But John Telfer sought no sympathy. No one had ever heard him speak of his misfortune, —not even my father, though there was a tacit understanding on the subject between them. If ever allusion was made to it, the involuntary contraction of his shaggy grey eyebrow, and of the muscles around his mouth, only shewed that he was conscious of it. But most people, though they might not understand, revered his reserve.

Although his farm was small and unproductive, it was a dear one, and he was often advised to leave it; but it had been his father's before him; he himself had been born there, and it was a quiet, out-of-the-way place, secure from the observation of neighbours. That the last reason was the weightiest with John Telfer, the following remark, made to his wife, will prove.

They tell me, Eppy, I should throw up

the farm," he abruptly said to her one evening, when sitting ruminating by the fire, after a long day's toil at a distance; "but though it just allows us to live, and that's a', I canna bear to do't. It's sae lone and quiet a bit, that we dinna need to fear haeing our misfortune made a mock o', as it wad be, if we were nearer to neebors."

And his eye rested with a reluctant and yet pitying expression, as he spoke, on an object opposite.

It was his idiot son, who occupied a stool on the other side of the hearth. God knows, it was a mournful sight for a father's eye! The idiot was not physically deformed, as is sometimes the case with those unfortunates. He was a remarkably tall powerful man; though with a slouching, round-shouldered gait, that took somewhat from his height. He had evidently been lying in the barn, where he spent most of his time burrowing

like some obscene animal among the straw, for his well-patched clothes were covered with dust, and had some fragments of the former sticking about them. He was rocking himself backwards and forwards, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the fire, and muttering audibly with his coarse blubber lips, apparently quite unconscious of all around him. He did not appear to hear his father's words, though so suddenly spoken.

And yet no stranger could have looked upon him, without a certain feeling of apprehension mingling with pity for his obvious infirmity ; for in addition to the vacant look of idiotcy, there was a peculiar and malignant expression in his eye, that showed if his passions were roused, they would be fearfully violent.

“ Oh, gudeman, it's the will o' God that he is what he is,” said Eppy Telfer, rather in answer to what she knew was passing in

her husband's mind at the moment, than to his words. She cast a look of affection on her wretched offspring as she spoke, and paused in her preparations for supper, to lift her apron and stealthily wipe her eyes, which were overflowing.

"I ken that, Eppy," replied her husband, solemnly; "and He kens," he added, after a pause, "that I am willing to submit." And he said no more.

Eppy Telfer, as she was called in the parish—for women of her rank of life are seldom addressed by the title of mistress in Scotland—was altogether of a different nature from her husband. While his stronger and more reflective mind brooded painfully over their affliction—his very submission to the appointment of Providence having something stern and fearful in it—hers was contented and undisturbed. The future which appalled him, gave her little concern. Sometimes the

thought would cross her mind, "if she were to die, what would become of Will?" But her disposition was too cheerful and trusting to be long depressed even by this. "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be," was Eppy's motto. Her simple faith might have taught a lesson to her husband.

The uniform tenderness which she lavished upon her idiot son was most affecting to witness. She guessed, rather than knew the feelings with which his father regarded him; and it seemed as if she endeavoured to atone for them by her own affection. But the idiot was insensible to both. The animal we feed and tend will gradually become attached to us; on "daft Will" kindness or coldness made no impression. He seemed incapable of gratitude, for though he would allow his mother to feed and caress him, perhaps, the next moment, in some sudden fit of anger, he would strike her violently. But this only

gave her concern when it happened in the father's presence. Though of an unusually open and guileless character, she instinctively endeavoured to conceal all such occurrences from him. "My poor Will," she always called her son, when speaking of him; and nothing seemed to pain her more than to see any one betray apprehension in his presence.

"He's no sae ill as he's ca'ed, Mem," she once said to my mother; "he's a wee unsettled, nae doubt; but naebody need be feared for my Will."

Indeed, if he had been the most promising and dutiful of sons, instead of the poor dependant wretch he was, she could not have shown him greater attachment. What made others shrink from him, seemed, on the contrary, to endear him to her. He was evidently the first object in her eyes. But it was melancholy to see her lavish the same

words and attentions upon the grown man, that she had bestowed upon the child. She soothed and petted him ; grudged no toil or privation to gratify him ; bore uncomplainingly with his violence ; loved his very unsightliness, as only a mother could do. What an unfathomed depth of tenderness is that sometimes tortured thing—a mother's heart ! When I think of Eppy Telfer and her son, I feel that man's fortitude is a weak thing compared with woman's love and endurance.

Eppy was a toiling, frugal creature : she was never idle. Her cows, her pigs, her poultry, her domestic duties, allowed her no relaxation ; and she was happy nevertheless. Her temper had a sunshine in it that was never clouded. Even her husband, though grave and stern, was not insensible to its influence. It was only in her presence, indeed, that his brow unbent, or that something like cheerfulness appeared

in his aspect. And well did he know that but for Eppy's careful, thrifty disposition, he should have been compelled to relinquish his little farm.

The produce of her dairy was much esteemed. The wild heathy pasturage on which her cows fed, was considered beneficial to their milk. Once a week did she herself carry her butter and eggs to the nearest market-town, a distance of eight miles from the farm—a long weary walk; but from which she always returned with a well-filled purse, and unfailing good humour: and her gains in this way went far to pay the rent; for John's fields did little more than maintain his family in meal and potatoes.

Often did my honoured mother and I visit Eppy Telfer, and never once did we find her unoccupied. If she were not bustling about the farm-yard, in the discharge of some of her multifarious out-of-doors avocations, she

was either sitting by the fireside, or on the old stone bench by the door, mending her son's or husband's garments. She never seemed to feel solitary, though her house was so lonely.

"To sit by the door-cheek, and beek hersell in the sun, wi' the green moor afore her, was her great pleasure," she said; "and how could she want for company, when Will was aye gaun about—no to mention the bits o' beasts and birds? that was company enuch for her, till the gudeman cam hame at een."

She was a trig, comely little woman of her years, with a face as blythe as a sunbeam. It made one happy for the rest of the day just to look at her. Her constant cheerfulness, arising from the native tendency of her mind to look upon the bright side of things, had always for the time an influence over those who came in contact with her. One felt ashamed

in her presence of having yielded to despondency or fretfulness under the petty cares and annoyances of daily life. She was, indeed, an unconscious reprover of the murmurer and the egotist. Who had more cares than Eppy, and yet upon whom sat they so lightly ?

We seldom saw Will when we visited Muir-end. He disliked strangers, and if one was seen approaching, would steal away to hide himself in the barn or the outfield. He never could be persuaded to work ; but spent his whole time either in sleep or in lounging listlessly about the doors. It had been found impossible to educate him ; indeed, even to convey the simplest instruction to his mind. When a child, he had been sent to the parish school ; the parents tremblingly hoping that the schoolmaster might accomplish what they had found themselves unable to execute ; but with wounded feelings and deep humiliation, they soon withdrew him, after discovering

that the only thing he had gained there, or was ever likely to gain, was a nickname expressive of his hopeless condition. It was time, for "daft Will," as he was called by his school-mates, had more than once been excited by their taunts to fits of anger, so violent as almost to amount to frenzy.

Formerly, the parents had tried to deceive themselves as to the extent of their misfortune; but they could do so no longer. They now felt convinced—at least the father—of his total mental incapacity, and forbore to irritate him by attempting instruction. From that day, he had never left the farm, growing gradually up to manhood a burden upon his parents—an unconscious blight upon his father's spirits, but the object of his mother's unswerving love and sympathy.

Poor John Telfer! his mind had brooded over his affliction, till he had at last persuaded himself to regard it as a judgment

from Heaven for his own sins. Having once admitted this idea, it coloured his whole existence. His mental vision became distorted—every event in his joyless and monotonous life was viewed in reference to the one ruling idea. No wonder that John seemed a severe and gloomy man. Those that blamed him for this, did not sufficiently consider the hard struggle which he had had with life for nigh sixty years. Existence had been a weary, bitter thing to him. He had known no rest, and he had none to look forward to, but that sure one for which both rich and poor are bound—the grave. It would have been welcome, but John had to think of others. What would become of his wife and son, if his strength failed him? They must leave the farm, where only the idiot was manageable. He had not been able to make any provision for them. Times were hard; and Will, instead of being a help, was a hindrance. It was not easy to

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provide for him : he was greedy and wasteful. Old men looked forward to be assisted by the children they had reared and fed, but such a hope was not for John Telfer ; he must toil to the end. John's life had been a hard-suffering one ; and now it was closing in fears and darkness.

The Telfers had always been marked as a thoughtful, melancholy family, the old people of the parish said. I am inclined to believe them, for I think that most of these disorders of the mind are traceable to a peculiarity in the blood ; and an evil inheritance they form.

It was truly a dark day for Muirend when John Telfer was laid upon that bed from which he was never more to rise. His constitution, broken with the toils and exposure of sixty years, gave way at the first approach of illness. He struggled till he could struggle no longer ; and, with a heavy heart, not for himself, but for others, poor John Telfer lay down to die.

It was on a summer forenoon that I accompanied my mother to visit him. It was a long and a lonely walk over the hills to the farm ; but it was a delight to pass along the silent ridges, and to breathe their pure and invigorating air. Mountains seem to lift one nearer to God. I know not how it is, but my soul is always most devotional when among the hills, and so it was with me even in boyhood.

The moor was that day bathed in golden sunshine. Even it looked beautiful, as we gazed down upon it from the last of the brown hills we had to cross. The great white clouds that sailed slowly along the calm blue sky, cast shifting shadows on the landscape, relieving its monotony ; the heather and fern that covered the waste were of a fresh green ; and even the huge grey stones that seemed so dreary and ghost-like in winter, had this day a peculiar beauty of their own. The little lonely farm standing nestling at the foot of the hill on

which we stood, was looking its best. The smoke of a brisk peat fire curled rapidly up into the clear sunny air; the cows were feeding in company with John's idle horse, quietly on the moor; the patches of corn and potatoes were green and flourishing; and the whole scene, though solitary as ever, was not painfully so. But, though nature seemed unusually active there—nay, even joyous, I felt a solemn and mysterious sadness steal over my spirits, for I knew, within that dwelling were sorrow, suffering, and approaching death.

As we drew near the house, we saw Eppy in the yard, busy as ever. She needed to exert herself doubly now, for everything depended upon her. At the sound of our footsteps, the dog, who had been lying in the sunshine, snapping lazily at the flies that disturbed his repose, started up, and made his deep barking resound over the moor. Eppy looked up to see who her visitors were, and then hastened

forward to welcome us, while we saw the idiot, who had been basking like the dog before the door, glide off, as usual, to conceal himself.

“Deed, Mem,” said Eppy, in answer to my mother’s inquiries for her husband, “he’s sair distressed baith in body and mind—nae rest, nicht nor day. I hae left him a wee while to look after the beasts, for they canna be neglected. Wark maun gang on wi the like o’ huz, though the heart be heavy; and wae’s me, Mem, it’s a hard thing for folk to part that hae been sae lang thegither as me and John.” And tears trickled quietly down the poor woman’s cheeks as she spoke.

“But I hope he is somewhat more composed in mind than when Mr. Balderstone saw him, Eppy,” said my mother, in her usual kind way.

“Weel, Mem, I canna just say,” answered Eppy; “whiles he does seem to be, but at

ither times—and they're the langest, for what relief he has comes only in gliffs—it's just the auld story ower again: 'what's to come o' me and Will.' I keep him as weel as I can out o' his father's sight; but deed, it's o' little use, and the puir lad likes the fireside. Eh, Sirs! if he wad but trust us to Providence, and think o' his ainsell. But it's just the thoughtfulness o' his heart, for, though a quiet man, he's been a kind, kind gudeman to me. The Lord's will be done, and may He pardon a' my murmuring, for the spirit will rise at sic times, whether we will or no."

Poor Eppy! hers had been a meek and a quiet spirit all her days; and such, in the sight of the Lord, is of great price. Her murmuring was but the natural reluctance of the heart to the breaking of old and familiar ties, though she feared it was rebellion.

"I sometimes hear him in the nicht," con-

tinued Eppy, as if the utterance of her thoughts was a relief, and encouraged by my mother's sympathy, "I sometimes hear him pleading wi' the Lord for us ; he thinks at thae times I am sleeping, and I wadna let him ken that I hear him for the warld. But oh ! Mem, ye never heard sic petitions in a' your days ; sic groanings and signs o' inward trouble ; it's like the wrestling o' Jacob wi' the angel, and maks my vera heart sair to listen till him. I whiles pretend to wauken just to mak him quiet, for his vera earnestness hurts his body, and is bringing him fast doon. He still keeps up the exercise too—but he'll no be lang spared to do't."

And as she spoke, she sat hastily down upon the stone seat, as if unable to control herself longer, and flinging her apron over her head, gave way to the feelings which she had not often leisure to indulge.

My mother wept also, and spoke some

kindly words to her ; and, at length, Eppy took away the covering from her face, and looked up calmly.

“I ken it’s wrang to give way this gate,” she said, rising ; “and I dinna often do’t, but the sicht o’ your kind face, Mem, and the speakin about John, has made my heart fu’. Come your ways in !”

And carefully drying her eyes, she preceded us into the house, and led us to her husband’s bedside.

The house contained only two apartments—the kitchen, and what was called the spence ; but the latter was used by Eppy as a dairy. The kitchen was bed-room as well as sitting-room to the family ; for the poor are easily accommodated. It was comfortably, though roughly furnished, and tolerably clean, considering how Eppy’s time was occupied. John lay in one of the close box beds, cus-

tomary among our peasantry. The old man's face was fearfully changed since we had last seen him ; he was evidently near his end. It was sharp and sallow ; and there was a painful, troubled expression in his eye, that showed an overburdened and anxious mind. It was the first time I had seen a dying person, and though but a child at that time—for I was not passing ten years old—the whole circumstances of the interview are stamped vividly upon my mind.

"I am failing, Mem ; I am fast failing," was his solemn and feebly articulated answer to my mother's gentle salutation.

"I am sorry to hear it, John," she said ; "but it may be the Lord's will that you shall yet be restored."

"That will I never be," he answered decidedly. "I shall never place foot on the earth again ; but that would give me little

concern if it were not for *them*. Oh! Mem, it's a sair trial to think that when I am gane they will hae naebody to look to them, or to provide for them, and Will's no easy to provide for; and then, wha is to manage him?"

"Noo, that's just the way he gangs on, Mrs. Balderstone, Mem, frae morning till nicht," said poor Eppy, looking on her dying husband with pitying eyes; "it's aye, Eppy Eppy, and Will Will, sometimes for an hour thegither. Wows me! John, man, isna there a God aboon us; and surely if He's cared for us a' alang—an' but for Him, how could we hae fought on as we hae dune—He will care for us still. And as to puir Will, the lad's canny eneuch, though he mayna be a' that he should be."

"He struck her—he struck her before my vera een this day; and me lying like a sense-

less log here, no able to prevent him," said the poor old man, looking mournfully into my mother's face; "he will murder his mother or a's done."

"Noo, to hear the like o' that," said Eppy, earnestly, and in tones of great distress; "Mrs. Balderstone, Mem, ye mauna mind what our John says. Murder me—my Will murder me! Thank God, he's no sae bad yet, and never will be! I wonder, John, to hear ye misca' your ain flesh and bluid; but you're no yoursell, or ye wadna do't. And as to his striking me, it was just a bit scuff o' the arm—wadna hae harmed a bairn—just his fun, puir fallow."

"Ay, ay—that's aye what ye say, but I ken better," groaned her husband, turning his head towards the back of the bed, as if to hide his countenance from us.

It was the first time he had ever alluded

to his unhappy son before a stranger—his reserve had at last given way. But my mother's gentle manner often won confidence from others. She could not help feeling alarmed by his looks and words. She knew that in the parish the idiot was considered dangerous; and impelled by her fears, she at last ventured to hint, that perhaps restraint might be advisable in his case. But Eppy seemed so deeply wounded by the insinuation, that my mother immediately regretted she had made it.

“Na, na!” she exclaimed, with much emotion, “my bairn shall never be shut up in a madhouse for idle folk to come and glower at sae lang as I live. Weel-a-wat, there's naebody needs to fear him, and least of a' his ain mither. I ken that ye mean kindly, Mem, by what ye say, and I dinna tak it ill; but I would rather work my

fingers to the bane to provide for him," holding them out, as she spoke, "than think o' such a thing."

Poor John! it was difficult to reason with him; and my mother was not a woman fitted for it. She could give sympathy, but she had not the art of dealing with such peculiar and unusual cases as his; so, after sitting some time by his bedside, and endeavouring to comfort him, to which he only replied by groans and tossings, she rose and took her leave.

Eppy's feelings would have been much hurt if we had refused a draught of milk; therefore, we sat down on the bench without, and partook of it, while she stood near, talking to us of John. My mother asked her if he had been grave and thoughtful as a young man.

"He was quieter and graver than most," Eppy said, a slight shadow passing over her face

at the question; "but nothing bye ordinar. He never had muckle pleasure in daffin, or in young men's sports, though it wasna for lack o' manhood, for he was baulder than mony when it was needed. But it was only when Will was some years auld, and nae ither bairns born to us, that the cloud seemed to settle doun on him, and it has been aye deepening sin, syne. But we canna hae a' we wish in this warld, Mem," she continued, speaking in her usual cheerful way; "and though this has maybe been a kind o' trial to me, I hae had mony blessings to put against it. We've a' had our health till noo, which is a great cause o' thankfulness; and though John's sae sair dooncast, puir man, aboot what's to come o' us, I am persuaded in my ain mind that we will be weel provided for; though I wadna like to leave the place we hae sae lang lived in, to gang amang strangers, and I

think I wad miss the quietness an' the pure fresh air o' the moor. But if it's God's will we should, then, of course, we maun submit."

"It's a great thing, my dear," said my mother, thoughtfully, when we were on our way home, "to be able to preserve a contented and trusting mind in all circumstances. Eppy Telfer is a happy woman."

It seemed a very strange thing to me to hear my mother say so at that time; but my own experience in life has made it plain.

Death at last kindly came, and relieved John from what had truly been to him a weary, troubled life. He died, as he had lived, a religious, but a gloomy and desponding man. Through the whole parish there had been universal sympathy felt for the Telfers; it had been shown in deeds

as well as in words ; but now that John was gone, it seemed doubled. The farmers offered their assistance to the widow, both now and in the future management of the little farm. All were anxious to do something ; and poor Eppy's feelings were greatly soothed by these marks of respect—as she considered them—to her husband's memory. She had also many offers of company in her present melancholy circumstances ; but these she refused.

“ She had nae fear of the dead,” she said ; “ and she kent it would anger Will if there was onybody wi' her.”

So the widow remained alone with her idiot son and her husband's corpse in the lonely farm-house, till the day of burial.

I remember my father's description of that day. It was painful, he said, to witness poor Eppy's distress that a stranger—they had no

relations—should lay her husband's head in the grave. Though unwilling, in general, to trust Will out of her sight, she now tried to persuade him to put on his father's Sunday clothes, and accompany the funeral. But Will, who was getting excited by the presence of so many strangers about the farm, would not be prevailed upon. She was partly pacified, at length, by my father's undertaking the duty which custom devolves upon the dead's nearest of kin.

“Ye are vera kind, Sir,” she said, gratefully, but still weeping bitterly; “vera kind indeed; and it will be a great compliment that our minister suld dae such a thing for us. But oh! Sirs, Sirs, to think that my gudeman should hae a son o’ his ain, and yet that son refuse to lay his father’s head in the grave.”

Poor Eppy! the night following the burial

must have been a sad one to her. Her husband was lying with his fathers in the distant churchyard, and she was now wholly alone with her son and her sorrows—miserable companions!

There was no dredgie* after the funeral, on account of the widow's peculiar situation. The women who had assisted her in the melancholy duties of the day, took their leave by her desire, after they had milked the cows, and arranged the house. The stars, however, shone brightly down on the moor that night, and the moonlight fell softly on the small windows and the low thatched roof of the lone farm-house. It was a dreary solitude for a new-made widow, but her God was with Eppy.

She might soon be seen toiling as before.

* Feast succeeding a burial.

John and his old grey horse, as weather-beaten and rugged as himself, were no longer to be observed on the moor; but all else was as formerly about the farm.

Eppy now seemed to have ten hands instead of two, so much work did she accomplish. A shade, however, had passed over her sunny face. It was graver now, but as full of hope and serenity as ever. There was no talk, as yet, of their leaving the farm. Eppy was resolved to do so only if she found it impossible to live by it. She had time to prove this before the spring arrived; then she must make her decision. A busy time was before her. The crops, which were not yet ripened, were to be cut and stored, and the potatoes to be lifted. For the former, Farmer Johnstone, of the Haughhead, her nearest neighbour, had promised the assistance of his servants, and Eppy thought she might manage

the latter by herself. She had a strong confidence in her own powers of labour.

And day after day did she battle for the sake of her son and the old homestead, while Will grovelled among the straw in the barn, or basked in the sunshine that bathed her brow with perspiration. It was sufficient gratification for her to see him enjoying existence thus in his own fashion; and if at any time he was rude and violent, she did not murmur, but thanked God that the father was not there to be pained by the sight of it.

Morning after morning did she rise from her bed while the grey light was yet struggling with the darkness, to cast the peats on the moor for their winter's fuel, or to toil for hours at her churn; setting off cheerfully afterwards on her walk of eight miles to the market-town, thankful if she and her baskets got a "chance lift" in a cart. And her butter

and eggs disposed of, and her small purchases made—Will's gratification being, as usual, her first object—she might have been met on her way home, weary but happy; for she was going to rejoin him.

Her only sad times were when she had leisure to think of the husband of thirty years whom she had lost. When sitting by the fireside of an evening, she would find herself, she said, listening for the sound of his foot approaching the door, and wondering what was detaining him. Her never-failing resource on these occasions was her Bible, and from its promises she drew renewed peace and consolation.

It must have been a touching sight to have seen the mother and son at their evening exercise, for she still kept up the worship of God in her house. Of course, with Will it was a mere form; but perhaps the

poor mother thought otherwise. It was at these seasons that she most missed John : his voice had raised the psalm, and had guided their devotions:—it was at these seasons, and on Sabbaths. Her walk to church was now a lonely one. I remember her, in her humble widow's weeds, coming quietly and sadly into the congregation, with her Bible carefully wrapped up in her white pocket-handkerchief ; sitting alone in the pew ; and when the service was over, and she had returned the numerous kindly greetings of “How's a' wi' ye, Eppy—and how's a' at the farm?” that she received from her neighbours in the churchyard, hurrying away home, for fear that Will, who never came to church, might be missing her. Ah ! that long, lonely road over the hills, how full it must have been of memories for Eppy !

The harvest was at length gathered in, the potatoes were stored by Eppy's own exertions, the winter stack of peats was built up, and there was every prospect that they would be able to continue at the farm. There was less to do in winter, but still Eppy was busy. She must spin clothing for herself and her son, and though she occasionally hired a man to thrash out the corn in the barn, she often worked at the flail herself. It was astonishing how her frame stood the severe and constant labour to which she subjected it. Her contented spirit seemed an elixir of life. And then it was for Will—to save him from a life of confinement and, as she thought, horror.

The spring came. Eppy's fields were ploughed and sown at a little expense to her. She planted her potatoes with her own hands. Her cows had calved, and the rent was ready.

All things had gone prosperously with her. She had been shown much kindness, from quarters too from which she had no expectation.

“Didna I say, Mem,” she said feelingly to my mother, “that we wad be provided for? Oh! if my puir gudeman had had the consolation o’ feeling this in his last hours;—but he kens it noo.”

Years passed on at the muirland farm. The grass had long been thick and green on John’s grave. Eppy visited it every Sabbath, reading her Bible beside it in the summer weather during the interval between the two services. She and Will were still the sole inhabitants of Muirend. She managed the farm with occasional assistance, and always contrived to pay her rent punctually. Her landlord, though a hard man, was touched

by the widow's industry, and promised to let the ground to no other so long as she could keep it. There was not much likelihood of rivalry, however,—no one in the parish would have deprived Eppy of the farm; besides, the land was poor, and the rent high. The place, too, had somehow got a bad name since John's death. Our people were then of a remarkably superstitious turn. They would have it, that as Jenny the tinker haunted the lower part of the moss, near to Haughhead, old John Telfer's spirit disturbed the upper. How the story originated, I know not; probably from some rumour of John's death-bed despondency—exaggerated, of course—that had got abroad.

But I am not aware that it ever reached Eppy's ears, who seemed contented as of old with her solitude. She was the same happy,

unmurmuring, humble creature as fomrerly, thankful in being able to provide for Will and herself; alive to all God's mercies, and to her own unworthiness, and utterly unconscious of merit and self-sacrifice.

She was getting up in years, however. Though active as ever, her frame was showing traces of the hard toil it had undergone, and the furrows were gathering thickly on her brow. People began to talk of the change on Eppy's appearance, and to wonder, if her strength gave way, what would become of her and Will. She seemed sensible of this herself, and occasionally spoke of hiring some one to assist her with the farm; but she always put it off for a season.

"I will warstle on as lang as I can," she said; "for Will, puir fallow, likes nae-body about the place but mysell, and the farm can ill afford a servant's wage. We

will see when the time comes; and then the way will dootless be opened."

It *was* opened; but not as Eppy had anticipated. A great trouble came upon her—Will grew ill. As a child he had been much distressed with pain and giddiness in the head—a threatening of water the doctor had said. He had overcome it; but now the latter symptom suddenly returned. He was never violent now, but a heavy stupor began to settle down upon him. He took to his bed, and refused to rise.

Now was Eppy's severest time of trial. She could not work as she had formerly done, and yet attend upon Will. She was at length obliged to procure an assistant.

Month after month passed on, and the strong frame of the idiot became weak and helpless as a child. Eppy could not have nursed him without assistance. The girl she

had hired was kind and trustworthy, and Will could not now be irritated by her presence: his mental faculties were entirely obscured. The doctor had given the mother no hope from the first; and ere long Eppy was content that it should be so.

“If I had been taen awa first,” she said, “what wad hae become o’ him? I couldna hae died in peace, leaving Will ahint me. God kens that this is best for us baith.”

She now spoke like one who was done with the world, and who was busy setting her house in order. When Will was gone, her work she evidently felt would be finished; and her simple allusions to the future were therefore often touching and startling. For instance, she would allude to the crops which were just appearing above ground, as if she would not live to see them cut down; and would give directions about the treatment of

her two cows, Hawky and Mirly, when she was "awa."

"Ye maun mind, Jenny," she said to her handmaiden one day, "that Hawky is aye apt to tak a tout about autumn, sae tak care no to neglect her, or ye may rue it."

"But I houp ye'll be here then yoursell, Mistress," said the girl. "I dinna like to hear ye speak in that way."

"I wadna like to distress ye, Jenny; but I'll no be here," she answered significantly.

Her mind seemed always calm and resigned—even cheerful. She spoke of death, as if he were a friend whom she shortly expected to meet—not an enemy to be struggled with. She often alluded to the approaching union with her husband, when she would have the joy of seeing the cloud

gone from his face; and of finding Will—who had arrived before her—with a mind clear and fresh from God.

“And oh! winna that be a sight for me?” she exclaimed, earnestly.

It was strange, but it did strike those who heard her speak thus, that a gradual failing and alteration was taking place in her appearance. Will’s illness, they said, had made her ten years older. Perhaps, it really would be as she anticipated. They, at least, ceased to expostulate with her when she spoke of death.

She was very grateful to the girl who assisted her to nurse Will. “When the rent, and the doctor, and the funeral expenses were paid,” she said, “she would get all the plenishing in return for her kindness to Will.” And she asked my father to make a memorandum of her wishes, and signed

it "to prevent," she added, "any difficulty that might afterwards occur." This was Eppy's last will and testament. It was evident to all that she did not expect long to survive her son.

And so it did come to pass—not that Eppy had been supernaturally enabled to look into futurity, but that her work on this earth was really over when Will died. With him, energy and endurance—overstrained for years—sunk instantly. She became infirm and weak in a moment, to the astonishment of all. Nature, unmercifully tasked, had her revenge. Eppy was found dead in her bed just three weeks after Will was buried; and as she herself had foretold, the oats and the barley had not ripened at the farm when she was laid by his side.

I visited the spot some years ago. The gable-end of the dwelling-house, blackened

and tottering, was alone standing—all else had disappeared. It had always been considered a melancholy place, but now it was the very picture of desolation. The fields had gone back to their original wildness from want of cultivation, for no tenant had been found for the farm. The people still persisted in saying the place was haunted. The very road had vanished; at least there was but a faint track visible through the moss. Thirty years had almost obliterated the traces of man from the scene. But for the broken wall no one could have believed that he had ever dwelt there. There is also a mossy, crumbling stone in the parish churchyard which tells of the Telfers, farmers at Muirend, but probably by this time it is illegible.

There are many absurd stories current among the peasantry concerning the spot, and as it is far away from neighbours—indeed

utterly isolated—very few ever visit it. No one in the parish, unless it may be the minister, will venture to cross any part of the moor after the darkening. And truly, I do not wonder at the people, for even in broad daylight, and with the warm recollection of Eppy Telfer in my mind, I felt a strange eerie sensation creep over me, as I stood alone and looked on the crumbling wall and waste fields of what had once been the muirland farm.”

“ Hope always, and pray always,” thought Mary, as she sat musing by her fire that night before going to bed. “ I will endeavour to do this, and will remember poor Eppy Telfer when I am inclined to despond.”

She took out her lover’s last letter, and read and re-read it. It had reached her the previous day. It was filled with allusions to

the family party that had just separated. His heart was with them. She went to bed at length and fell asleep to dream of glowing skies and the luxuriance of tropical vegetation, while the snow fell thickly and silently without, and Nature donned the white mantle of the wintry North.

She remained at Craiglee for some weeks, and then returned home, to the immeasurable regret of those she quitted—to the great happiness of her mother and Martha.

CHAPTER XI.

THE month of July had arrived, and found Nelly much changed. Her spirits were very low, her colour and eyes were grown dim, and her step dull and heavy. She was now often in tears—tears that would not be repressed, and which gushed forth on the most trivial occasions.

She was evidently most unhappy, though she would not avow the cause of it. No longer did she steal down stairs to gossip with her fellows, and have a share in any

amusement that might be going on amongst them; sad and solitary, she sat and worked in the room allotted for the purpose, though her trembling fingers could sometimes ill guide her needle.

A letter from home now kept her crying one half of the following night. As to her own correspondence with her friends, it was much less regular than it used to be. Nelly could not endure to write.

Strange, significant nods, winks, and surmises began to be exchanged by the other servants concerning her. Not that they did not pity her, for they had a shrewd guess of what ailed her, but that there is a strange kind of satisfaction in anticipating a fracas, even though our own friend is to suffer from it. Janet was the only one who showed no sympathy for her; but that young woman's friendship had rapidly cooled of

late, on finding that Nelly's attractions were more powerful than her own. To say that she rejoiced in the poor girl's unhappy situation, is a strong assertion, but perhaps not far from the truth. Nelly, at all events, shunned her company as much as she once had sought it. Janet, indeed, knew how to wound her. Her allusions to Winstraelea were cruelly meant, and had a cruel effect. Any remark about her parents seemed now to agonize Nelly, as well as the mention of her lover's name.

That lover—what had become him? He was no longer to be seen in Nelly's company. It was many weeks since he had visited Moray Place. "A cold-hearted vagabond," the cook indignantly called him; she had considerable feeling, notwithstanding her failings. Nelly could not bear this neglect with calmness. If *he* deserted her, on whom would she

depend? to whom could she have recourse? Letter after letter, stained with tears, and almost illegible from the nervous tremor of the hand which traced it, did she dispatch to him. But all without effect: he came not, he wrote not; and at last Nelly, emboldened by despair, sought him at his lodgings, and found that, probably in anticipation of such an appeal, he had changed them—to what quarter of the town, the suspicious-looking and irritated lodging-house keeper could not inform her. Oh! with what a heavy heart did Nelly retrace her steps! with what agony of mind did she contemplate the future! It almost drove her to frenzy to think of what her parents might shortly learn.

“Oh! that I had never left Winstraelea,” exclaimed Nelly again and again, in her misery, “or that I had minded what Mrs. Elliot said. What, oh! what will my father and mother say!”

Poor fallen girl! to have seen her walking up and down that room in the despair and terror of her mind, who would have recognized in her the gay, sprightly Nelly of Winstraelea! Her dress was neglected; indeed, on the pretence of illness, she now constantly wore a shawl which concealed her figure, and which she would nervously arrange whenever any one entered the room. Her sleep did not refresh her: it was disturbed with fearful dreams. She loathed her food; she grew nervous and hysterical. Her mistress became seriously displeased with her careless performance or total neglect of duties; but she did not guess the cause of this. And all Malcolm's hints and innuendoes, which were intended to arouse her attention, failed most remarkably to do so.

"I'll speak plain out before another week is over," said the nursery-maid to herself, in great disgust; "and yet I'm sorry for the

poor misguided thing ; but it's my duty, and I maun do it ; and I hope this'll be a lesson to the mistress to look better after the ways of her household."

"Are you sure you are not mistaken, Malcolm ?" said her mistress, after listening to a communication the former chose to make to her some few days after forming the resolution recorded in the last paragraph.

"No mistake at all, Ma'am ; your ain een, begging your pardon, might have told you it before this."

"My own eyes ! Why you don't mean to say——"

"The shawl, Ma'am !"

"The shawl !" rising hastily from her seat. "What ! is it as bad as that ? The abominable, light-headed huzzy ; she shall leave my house this moment."

"'Deed, Ma'am, it's what should be; she's not a fit person to be about the young leddies."

"And why, Malcolm," demanded Mrs. Maxwell Grey, indignantly, "have you been so long of telling me this?"

"Me, Ma'am; me! I'm sure I have been hinting't to you for the last month, but you would never listen to me."

Nor did she at present; she was too angry.

"Such doings in my house!" she exclaimed, breaking in upon Malcolm's defence; "such shocking profligacy; such——; but I will not countenance it by allowing her to stay another hour!"

"Ye hae countenanced it for a' that, Ma'am," was Malcolm's thought; but, of course, not expressed.

"Send her to me instantly. But no; I

could not endure to speak to her; go you to her, and tell her to pack up her clothes without a moment's delay, while I calculate her wages."

"Dear me, mamma, what is the matter?" said one of her daughters, as she entered the room at this moment. "Are you and Malcolm quarrelling, that you speak so loud?"

"Quarrelling! nonsense! But what do you think, Anne? what do you think? That abominable little maid of yours is—is—"

She paused for the proper word.

"Is what?" said Miss Maxwell Grey, with curiosity. "Is anything wrong?"

"She is in the family-way!" said her mother, with a burst of indignation.

"Oh! absurd, mamma, absurd!" said the young lady, opening her eyes widely, and

raising her eyebrows in token of incredulity. "What has put that into your head?"

"'Deed, it's nae absurd, Miss Maxwell Grey," said Malcolm, a little angry at having the assertion doubted; "it's just as true as you're standing there."

"But are you certain? Oh dear me, how sorry I am! To be sure, she is very much altered of late, and not nearly so attentive; but I thought she was not feeling well, and that she would improve. I hope it is not true—oh! mamma, I hope it is not true!"

"I suspect it is—indeed, I have not a doubt on the subject. Malcolm, go immediately, and do as I desired you. Bid her pack up instantly—instantly." And Malcolm quitted the room.

"But what are you going to do

with her, mamma?" inquired her daughter.

"Do with her! What should I do with her, but turn her out of doors?"

"But has she any friends here to go to?" said the young lady, pitifully.

"Nonsense! such people always have friends. I have nothing to do with that. But I will not encourage such immorality by permitting her to remain another hour under my roof, I promise you."

"Poor girl!" exclaimed Miss Maxwell Grey, for she now understood why Nelly's spirits had become so depressed.

"Miss Maxwell Grey," said her mother, with indignant surprise at this manifestation of sympathy towards one so worthless as Nelly, "I am astonished at you. Are your notions of morality really so lax as to expect me to retain this person in my family?"

“ Oh! no, no, mamma—of course not; but I am really sorry for her, she is so young and good-tempered; and perhaps the man was very wicked. At least, mamma, I wish you would endeavour to discover if she has any friends to go to. Her relations live a long way off.”

“ I presume she knows the way back to them. Have done now! No one can accuse me of neglecting any duty towards my fellow-creatures. Such a thing to happen in a well-regulated house like mine,—I am quite ashamed to think of it! Have done now, Anne!” seeing her daughter was again about to speak.

The young lady thus checked did not venture to say more. She walked to the window, and sat down, looking vexed and irritated; while her mother at the table began to calculate what wages were due to

Nelly for the short period that had elapsed since Whitsunday. It was only the middle of July now, so the sum was not a large one. Poor Nelly! she had scarcely anything in her own possession: her last wages had been expended on dress; she had been unable to purchase even the pound of fine tea she had proposed sending to her mother at the term.

"Somewhat less than a pound," exclaimed Mrs. Maxwell Grey, when she had finished her calculations.

"Oh, mamma! make it the pound," her daughter ventured to say, in a tone of entreaty.

"I will do no such thing," replied her mother, angrily; "she deserves nothing at all; and many in my place would give her nothing. I am treating her too well to give her this; and I particularly desire, Anne, that you give her no money yourself. You shall not leave

this room till she is gone, to make sure of it."

"Well, well mamma, I won't; but I think you might give it her for charity."

"Charity, forsooth! Well, Malcolm!" as the latter entered.

"She is going, Ma'am," said Malcolm, gravely, and with somewhat of a disturbed look.

"Well, take her that money then, and tell James to get a porter. See her off yourself; do you hear?"

And Malcolm again left the room; but with a heavier step than on the former occasion.

Poor, unhappy Nelly! she was crying bitterly as she hastily pushed her things into her trunk. She had not yet considered where she was to go, or what she was to do. For some time she had been dreading

the discovery of her disgrace; but still it had come upon her unexpectedly at the last, and with no plans formed. Her thoughts were all in confusion—to get out of the house unseen by any of the family, and to hide herself somewhere from every eye, was her instinctive desire rather than fixed purpose. She was overwhelmed with the suddenness of the announcement that she must leave Mrs. Maxwell Grey's house. Malcolm had delivered her mistress's orders as they had been issued—Nelly was told she must lose no time in obeying them.

She had been sitting sewing, and, as usual, wiping her eyes, and glancing nervously round in dread of any one entering the room. She had also, as usual, been endeavouring (but in vain) not to think—thought maddened her. She dared not look steadily at the future. She was not hard-

ened, poor thing; she had fallen, but not into the depths of vice—feeling and shame were still hers. She execrated now her vanity and folly—she was terror-struck at her own disgrace. Malcolm could not look on the agonized countenance of the girl, as she delivered the orders intrusted to her, without being moved. She now wished some one else had been the first to inform her mistress. Her heart accused her of cruelty. But though much softened, she would not betray it. She looked as severe as ever; but if one had carefully watched for it, they might have seen her secretly dash a tear from her eye, as with a slow, heavy step she left Nelly's room.

“There are your wages,” she said, as she entered the second time.

Nelly was now sitting on the top of her closed trunk, her eyes fixed upon vacancy,

and her fingers clenched tightly together. The old woman placed the money on her lap; but as she did not seem conscious of it, Malcolm roused her, and saw her put it into her pocket. Nelly afterwards could not recollect having done so.

“Are you ready now?” said Malcolm, trying to speak with indifference.

“Oh, me! what’ll I do—what’ll I do?” now broke from poor Nelly. “Oh! if I could but dee, and see naebody mair!”

“Hush! lassie; think on your father and mother,” said the old woman, breaking down entirely.

“Dinna mention them — dinna mention them!” shrieked the girl, covering her face, and rocking herself wildly to and fro; “I can never look them in the face again. “Oh! I wish I had been in my grave, or I left Winstraelea. Oh! I wish I had been in my grave!”

“ Ay, ye are a puir misfortunate young creature,” said Malcolm, wiping her eyes ; “ but ye maun just gang back to them, my woman, and afterwards try to make them amends. The Lord kens I pity ye. But I hear the porter coming up the stair for your things ; and the ledgy’ll no rest till ye’re awa.”

Nelly instantly rose with a frightened look ; the porter was at the door. Malcolm gave him the things ; and Nelly, scarcely conscious of what she did, followed him out. Her fellow-servants had been hovering about the staircase ever since they had discovered what had taken place above ; but as she made her appearance they all by one impulse darted down to the lower story, except the cook. She would not desert the girl in her disgrace. She took Nelly’s hand as she approached her, and whispered :

"Hae ye ony place in the toun to gang to, lassie?"

"No," she replied.

"Then gang to Mrs. Rory, the green-grocer's, in —— Street. She'll tak ye in, if ye tell her I sent ye; but I had better gie the direction to the man."

She did so, grasped Nelly's hand again with real feeling; and the girl found herself outside of that gay mansion which she had so desired to enter—from which she was now expelled in disgrace.

"What are ye snickering at, ye loon?" said the cook angrily to the man-servant, whom she encountered on her way to her own dominions, where she intended to fortify her agitated spirits with a dram; "is't onything to laugh at to see a puir creature thrown that way on the world? I daursay if ye had your deservings ye wouldna be lang here either."

And, in the excitement of her feelings, she slammed the kitchen door violently behind her; and cursing her mistress for an “auld, hard-hearted, hypocritical ——,” she betook herself to her usual solace in all circumstances —the whiskey-bottle.

Mr. Maxwell Grey complained bitterly of the bad cookery that day. His dinner made him ill, he said, and he lay in bed all next day.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. RORY, the greengrocer, had an extensive acquaintance among servants. Her house was a great "howff" of theirs. She kept a mangle as well as a vegetable shop, and there were few hours of the day—scandal said, few hours of the night—that her establishment was free from visitors. They came and went very much as suited themselves. Grave and prudent housewives had an objection to deal with Mrs. Rory; but those who did, found

her always the most civil and obliging of shop-women.

Mrs. Rory's husband was alive; but few people were aware of his existence, although he was seldom absent from the premises. He had nothing very particular to do there; still the same impertinent authority we have already quoted would sometimes assert that Mrs. Rory occasionally employed him in running errands, and in looking after the children, while she attended to the shop. Mr. Rory carried in the coals besides, arranged the vegetables for sale, and made himself generally useful. But Mr. Rory never dreamt of calling these coals, those vegetables, or the family apartments, his; he felt he only occupied the last upon sufferance. He was merely a "slave of the lamp" to Mrs. Rory, whose will was absolute.

She "snubbed" him occasionally, when she

was in a bad temper ; for, having, on account of business, to preserve a smiling appearance to her customers, it was necessary to relieve her feelings in the domestic circle. He never thought of murmuring, however, far less of retaliating ; though when little Dicky, the youngest—a remarkably precocious urchin—would begin, as was extremely natural, to imitate his mother's example, he would feel a little hurt and aggrieved, and ask him earnestly " not to do it."

He was a meek, timid-looking little man, Mr. Rory. He was somewhat spare in figure, for scandal again reported that Mrs. Rory was in the habit of stinting his victuals—all for his good, of course—and he had an oily, shining countenance, which he seemed constantly endeavouring to clear, but in vain, by rubbing it hard with a ragged pocket-handkerchief of a faded blue colour. He was easily startled and

made nervous, as he showed when serving the customers in any chance absence of Mrs. Rory, being apt to mistake greens for cabbages, carrots for onions, and to give himself and the customer a great deal of unnecessary trouble in consequence. Scandal again, in the shape of an exemplary old lady, who kept a rival green-shop at the corner of the street, did assert, in explanation of this infirmity, that Mr. Rory was "heart-broken" with ill usage, and that his blunders were all to be attributed to nervous apprehensions of his "better half." But as scandal has generally some personal motive for the tales she spreads, we will pay no more attention to her at the present time.

Mrs. Rory's was different from some green-shops, which do most of their business in the early part of the day. Her busiest time was always in the evening, after it grew dark.

To be sure, she had many customers for her mangle, and many of them found it convenient to bring their clothes late in the day. Many a poor widow and half-starved spinster of advanced years, who tried hard to make a living by mangling, would have been thankful for even half the custom Mrs. Rory enjoyed. Their mangles would be half a day idle, while hers was creaking, straining, and shrieking to the annoyance of her neighbours, from morning till night. But there was an attraction about Mrs. Rory's establishment which it was evident theirs did not possess.

The premises occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Rory could not be denominated extensive, still they contained several apartments, of which two only were appropriated to the use of the family. But Mrs. Rory sometimes took lodgers, and of course the mangle

required a room for itself. Servants out of place could generally be accommodated at Mrs. Rory's, especially if they had money in their pockets, though she occasionally was so disinterested as to receive them without it. I have promised the reader that I will not again quote scandal, and I will keep my word.

Indeed, Mrs. Rory's appearance ought to have annihilated that indefatigable busy-body, for it was eminently respectable. She was a tidy, ever-active, never-on-any-open-occasion ungracious individual, except it might be to Mr. Rory, and that, of course, was a domestic fact with which the public had no business to be acquainted.

She had keen eyes for her own interest—but who has not? And though she was occasionally in the habit of misstating facts, perhaps it arose from a defective memory—an infirmity with which we ourselves are

grievously afflicted. It is true she never was seen in a church; but then, though the mangle was quiet on Sabbath, many of her customers dropped in to inquire for her health, and of course detained her from ordinances. Mr. Rory and the children sometimes went, to keep up the respectability of the household, but it was never convenient for Mrs. Rory to accompany them. And I suppose a green-grocer may as reasonably plead business as an excuse for neglecting church, as a fine lady, a headache.

Mrs. Rory was middle-aged, rather comely, and somewhat more developed in figure than Mr. Rory. But as it was necessary for her constitution to live generously, she did not practise the same abstemiousness which she was compelled, out of her great solicitude for his health, to inflict upon him: hence her physical superiority.

Perhaps Mr. Rory had a tendency to apoplexy, or it might be that he was under the "cold-water" system of treatment. A wet blanket indeed (figuratively speaking) was generally thrown over his inclinations by Mrs. Rory.

With this exemplary female, Nelly had no personal acquaintance, which was rather remarkable, as Mrs. Rory was on terms of intimacy with several of her late fellow-servants—Janet and the cook in particular. Perhaps Nelly might have been introduced to her by the former in their days of lively friendship, if her attachment to Mr. Shephard had not wholly engrossed her mind. Mrs. Rory herself would have been much gratified by the introduction, for she took a motherly interest in all the servant-girls who frequented her shop.

They were good customers, and seldom

failed to recommend her to their friends. She kept "caumstone," matches, and all such trifling articles as are in daily request in households. These things were always needed, and Mrs. Rory's shop was always open to supply them. A servant-girl who had neglected to lay them in could get them at Mrs. Rory's, however late the hour. And really many mistresses, as well as servants, found it a convenient thing, though the former were apt to grumble at the time the latter spent on these errands.

Mrs. Rory herself was in the shop, and fortunately disengaged, when Nelly arrived. The name of her friend the cook in Mr. Maxwell Grey's, procured her an unusually gracious reception. Nor did poor, agitated, trembling Nelly, require even to hint her story for Mrs. Rory's enlightenment—that experienced person understood it at a glance.

"Ay, I see," darted through her mind as she regarded the young girl and her accompaniments, "turned out of her place. I wonder now, if she has any wages in her pocket."

We would be loth the reader should be prejudiced against Mrs. Rory by the concluding sentence of her soliloquy, so as to refuse her credit for that beautiful disinterestedness which adorned her character, and which so filled her bosom towards all young creatures, thrown perhaps by their own folly—perhaps by the harshness of others, destitute on the world.

As we have already said, she occasionally showed herself indifferent to "ways and means." But the truth is, Mrs. Rory, like the rest of the world, preferred present remuneration; still, when it was not forthcoming, she was willing to wait her customer's time.

And it very seldom happened, indeed, that she was eventually out of pocket by her transactions. Moreover, she was extremely useful in procuring "wet-nursings" for young women in Nelly's circumstances—situations so lucrative and comfortable in general, that we are not astonished at the profligacy which abounds amongst females in the lowest class.

Poor Virtue still often goes a-begging, but we occasionally give a high premium to Vice!

Nelly was received, as I have said, graciously, and soon found herself comfortably installed in the family apartment behind the shop; Mrs. Rory herself attending upon her, while Mr. Rory was desired to look to the customers. Mrs. Rory, of course, wished to know something of Nelly's history, and of the state of her funds, before committing herself to any arrangement. The conversation was car-

ried on by a series of questions on Mrs. Rory's side, and nervous, half-reluctant answers upon Nelly's.

"And sae ye hae nae friends in the toun, hinny?" said Mrs. Rory, at length.

"No ane, God help me!" said poor Nelly, bursting afresh into grief at the mention of friends. She could speak with tolerable calmness on any subject but that—even an allusion to her heartless lover did not so pain her as one to her parents.

"Houts, lassie! dinna take on sae," rejoined Mrs. Rory, who was not accustomed to such manifestations of feeling in her customers; "it canna be helped now, and mony a ane has been in this scrape besides yoursell. It'll neer be a mote in your marriage, lass."

Nelly shook her head, and returned no answer. Her face was concealed on the back

of her chair ; she was ashamed to meet Mrs. Rory's eyes.

"And do they ken onything about your situation, my woman, wherever they are?" asked Mrs. Rory, blandly.

"God forbid!" said Nelly, a shudder passing over her at the question.

"Then you're determined no to gang hame to them?" said the shrewd Mrs. Rory.

"Hame! I would sooner die than face my father and mother as I am!" She paused in great agitation, and drew her shawl hastily over her head. Mrs. Rory had relieved her of her bonnet when they entered the room.

"She'll no take on so sair about it or another month's gane," was Mrs. Rory's inward comment on the girl's distress; but she said aloud, and in a soothing tone: "Weel, my woman, I suppose there's nae

need to tell them, if ye dinna like. Doubtless, ye will have means to provide for yoursell till your time comes, and then we maun try to get ye a nursing."

Nelly instinctively put her hand into her pocket, as the graciously smiling, but keen-eyed Mrs. Rory spoke. She felt the money that Malcolm had placed there; but could not recollect how it came into her possession. She drew it out; and without counting it, put it into Mrs. Rory's hand, which willingly clutched it.

"That's a'," she said, humbly; "there's nae mair. But I have gude claise; and if ye'll take pity on me, you'll no be a loser. My father and mother, when I am dead—and I'm sure to dee—will gladly pay you, I ken, for a' you lay out on me, and for your trouble."

Mrs. Rory had a cough which annoyed

her sometimes, especially when she was arranging such delicate bargains as the present. It was convenient, for it allowed her to weigh and consider various points before delivering her answer. She had a very bad attack of it on this occasion. She balanced the subject in her mind, then the money in her hand; and finally began to count the latter.

“ Five—eight,” she murmured; “ ugh—ugh—ugh—twelve—sixteen—eighteen and eightpence—ay, that’s just it. Weel, hinny—ugh—ugh—ugh—weel, as I was saying—ugh—ugh. That weary cough o’ mine—it’ll be the death o’ me—(*sotto voce*—there’s nae fear o’ the lass deeing, she’s as tight made a quean’s I hae seen)—weel, as I was just gaun to say, if the cough had but let me, this money isna muckle; but I’s warrant ye’ll ken whaur to get mair when it’s dune.”

And she winked cunningly at her companion.

Nelly had looked suddenly up—she understood her meaning.

“If you mean the man that ——, I wouldna ask him for a sixpence to save me from starvation,” she said, with crimsoned cheeks and sparkling eyes.

“Ay, ay; is that the way o’t?” said Mrs. Rory; “but ye maunna gie way to pride, hinny; he’ll be glad to help ye, if he’s a *gentleman*.” And she fixed her eyes scrutinizingly on the girl’s countenance.

“He’s maybe a gentleman in station, but he’s nae gentleman in heart,” replied the poor indignant girl. “I hae gone to him already, and it’s nae use, I tell ye; he’s left his lodgings to be out of my way.”

“The black-hearted vagabond!” exclaimed Mrs. Rory, with great sincerity, for she did not

like this feature of the case. "Weel, hinny," (after a pause), "I suppose we maun just make this gang as far as we can, for I canna bear—I say I canna bear to turn a poor young creature like you awa for the want o' siller; and maybe I may be able to get you some sewing, and that'll bring in something. And I'll warrant—for ye maunna talk about deeing—we'll find ye out a nursing, and then ye'll pay me honestly back. If it wasna for the bairns," (in a whimpering tone), "I wad make ye welcome to house-room for naething, but we hae to win our bread, and it's no easy to get it in thae days, I'm sure."

And the conversation ended with Nelly being regularly installed in the privileges of a lodger in Mrs. Rory's mansion, amounting to a place in the family room, which was parlour, bedroom, and kitchen, and to a bed in a dark closet adjoining; the latter to be shared with

two children. And Nelly was grateful for the refuge, while Mrs. Rory returned tolerably contented to her shop, from which she summarily dismissed her husband, giving him only the brief information that the young woman "but the house" was to stay as a lodger. To which abrupt and unsatisfactory manner of communicating intelligence of some import to his domestic comfort, Mr. Rory was so accustomed, that he exhibited no surprise. Indeed, Mrs. Rory was seldom without a lodger like Nelly: her last one having taken her departure only a few days previously, to enter upon an excellent wet-nursing, obtained for her through Mrs. Rory's exertions, who had called with her at half the medical men's houses in town to inquire for such a situation.

"It's no great risk taking the lassie in," was Mrs. Rory's reflection on assuming her

place behind the counter. "She seems to be come of decent folk, who may see to my being paid; and, ony way, I have her kist and clothes for security. I dinna like greeting customers, however; but I'se warrant she'll soon be as brisk as her neebors; I hae seen it before."

Here leave we then Nelly for a considerable time, to have her spirits cheered by Mrs. Rory's matter-of-fact consolations, and to bear her part—and no inconsiderable one, as it proved—in the domestic labours. She never ventured out of doors, except in the dusk of the evening, though such precaution was little necessary. The Maxwell Greys, who never left town till the vacation, on their children's account, had gone to the Dingle, their country place, immediately after the discovery of Nelly's delinquency; leaving an old woman in charge of their town-house.

Mrs. Elliot and Mary were at Craiglee, whither they had gone early in June. Of course, they knew nothing of Nelly's disgrace; for Martha was no gossip, as we know, and was always the last person to learn any tale of scandal that was in circulation.

Observing how anxious Nelly was to conceal her frailty from her parents, Mrs. Rory, with happy ingenuity, advised her to write to them as usual, dating her letters as if still in Mrs. Maxwell Grey's service, she undertaking to call at Moray Place for any answers that might arrive. They were difficult letters to write. Nothing but the dread of rousing her parents' suspicions would have induced Nelly to endure the misery of penning them. But if it was a painful task to write those letters, the reading one from home was agony. To peruse these kindly

words, so ill-deserved, she felt—to see in every line the confidence her parents had that her conduct was consistent with the precepts they had taught her—to observe their utter and, it seemed to Nelly, almost dreadful unconsciousness of her disgrace, was to make her feel willing to sink under the earth, and hide her face where they would never see it more. As if to add to her sense of shame and self-upbraiding, she learned from one of these letters that her father—her good, worthy, respected father—had been elected an elder, or office-bearer, by the simple congregation of which he was a member. Such news would once have been most gratifying to Nelly. To be an elder's daughter was itself a certificate of character—of respectable parentage, at least. Now it only made her feel her fall from virtue more acutely. If her father learned what had befallen her, he

would never again, she was aware, lift up his head with confidence in his native place.

“See to his own family,” the envious and ill-conducted would say: “his daughter is no better than she should be; and how then can he take it upon him to reprove others?”

Nelly wept bitter tears the whole night after reading this intelligence.

“And they will be thinking I am sae pleased to hear o’t,” she thought. “I ken what my puir mother would say when they spoke of writing about it to me. And I would hae been pleased aince, but no now—no now.”

The derision and triumph with which the people of the Row—who had of old resented her airs of superiority—would hail the news of her disgrace, were very bitter to anticipate.

That the time might come when it could not be concealed from them and her parents, she dreaded to think of. And she eagerly listened to every project proposed to her by the experienced Mrs. Rory. Indeed, that person was an adept in everything involving mystery; and so long as she anticipated payment, she was willing to employ her talents in her neighbour's behalf.

The period for doubting Nelly's power of rewarding her had not yet arrived, and she was all alacrity in her service. And Nelly, who at first had delivered herself up to despair, began at length, under the influence of her cool, calculating, and certainly not oversqueamish adviser, to have a kind of trembling, fitful hope, that those whose good opinion she most desired to retain, might never become wiser on the subject of her frailty than she chose them to be. Mrs.

Rory was a little disappointed, however, as to the progress in cheerfulness made by her lodger. She was tired of seeing her so often low and nervous.

"I'm sure, I wish with all my heart the girl's time was come," was her private feeling. "I'm wearied trying to keep her up; and then she's so nice and particular forsooth, after a' that has happened, that I darena let on to her who visits in the house. I'm sick of such customers, say I. If she was once better, and I could get as good a nursing for her as Fullarton's Mary, I would be thankful; and then I would be sure of my money."

As to poor little Mr. Rory, he felt for Nelly, and was as kind to her as he had it in his power to be. She was growing very pale and weak-looking; and he always tried to give her the chair by the fire, and to

prevent the children troubling her. There were five of them, and it was not easy to keep them in order: Mr. Rory had a hard time of it.

Nelly was sensible of his kindness; but she was seldom in spirits for conversation—indeed, poor Mr. Rory had never much to say himself. However, they sat for hours together by the kitchen fire in the evenings, in a kind of melancholy fellowship, while Mrs. Rory attended to the customers in the shop.

As they sat thus — Nelly occupied with her needlework — the number of feet that traversed the little passage outside was sometimes quite astonishing. The noise of the mangle, too, never ceased; and it was often mingled with bursts of shrill female laughter, and deeper masculine voices. It was a queer, noisy,

bustling place, that mangle-room of Mrs. Rory's; but Nelly only thought that she had a brisk trade, and was a favourite with the public.

END OF VOL. I.

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NELLY ARMSTRONG.

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VOL. II.

NELLY ARMSTRONG:

A STORY OF THE DAY.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "ROSE DOUGLAS."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

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NELLY ARMSTRONG.

CHAPTER I.

THE winter had passed away; the first half of spring was gone. Nelly had been a mother nearly two months. She had expected to die; but she and her child were alive, though both were feeble and weak. Her dread of discovery, and uneasiness of mind, had protracted her recovery. Besides, the air in Mrs. Rory's back rooms was close and prejudicial to health, and Nelly had breathed no other for some weeks

She had been obliged to resist her parents' desire that she should return to them in November. Cruel and heartless they thought her, for she knew that her mother's health was failing, and that she was rapidly losing her eyesight. But still they never suspected the truth; her love of quiet and fine things, they supposed was what detained her in town. Neglected by their child, wounded in their feelings, they discontinued for some time their correspondence with her. It was a relief to Nelly, who trembled whenever she received a letter. But her consciousness of what they must think of her want of duty added to the weight on her spirits. "My punishment is greater than I can bear," was now often the cry of her heart.

Mr. Maxwell Grey's family were, as usual, in town. The old cook was still with them,

but Janet had been dismissed. The cook had occasionally visited Nelly during the winter, and always sent her her letters when they arrived. Mrs. Maxwell Grey, of course, knew nothing about them; she had long ago discarded Nelly from her thoughts. But the cook's visits had become more rare of late; perhaps she had begun to share in Mrs. Rory's apprehensions, and so determined to drop the acquaintance ere pecuniary loss should arise from it. Her friendship was not sufficiently devoted for such a trial.

Mrs. Rory was now heartily tired of Nelly, and she feared her own pocket was in danger. More than once she thought of picking a quarrel with her, and turning her to the door.

"The whimpering, pale-faced jade," she said to herself; "wha wad ever take her for a nurse? And she'll no consent to fill her

purse any other way. I wish I had never seen the face o' her."

When such reflections crossed Mrs. Rory's mind, she was apt to grow excited and vicious, and could scarcely command her temper so as to serve her customers with necessary suavity. But woe to the domestic circle when such restraint was practised in the shop! That unlucky person, Mr. Rory, was, as it were, crushed to the earth by the torrent of her wrath; and the poor, wan, trembling girl, who sat quietly all day in the corner, with her baby on her lap, speaking to no one, and seldom any one speaking to her, would press the child hastily to her bosom, as if to shield it from Mrs. Rory's resentment. Things were indeed coming rapidly to a crisis. Mrs. Rory felt they were—she was glad they were. Either Nelly must manage to pay her immediately for the expenses incurred, and for the

trouble she had had—Mrs. Rory occasionally practised the obstetric art—or she must tramp; Mrs. Rory had made up her mind.

Mrs. Rory had really done her best to enable Nelly to discharge her debt. She had entered her name, as nurse, in the book of every medical man in good practice in Edinburgh. But Nelly got little encouragement from them in her pursuit of a situation. They did not think, from her appearance, that she was capable of nourishing a child. Her own baby, which should have been a testimonial, was a poor, emaciated, wailing thing; and parents and doctors, with one accord, shook their heads when they looked at it. It would not do, the latter told her; she must give up all thought of obtaining a wet-nursing, and try to strengthen herself, or her child could not live.

But where was the nourishment to come

from, that was to produce this strength? Mrs. Rory could not, or would not supply it, now that there was almost a certainty that she would reap no harvest for her exertions. Nelly could not earn enough by needle-work, especially since her child was born, to keep body and soul together. Mrs. Rory occasionally allowed the girl to sit down to the family meals—she could not see her starve; but poor Nelly knew it was a grudging hand that doled out the victuals, and this took away her appetite. She dared not sit down at Mrs. Rory's table, unless expressly desired; and it depended much on the state of Mrs. Rory's "nerves"—for so she denominated her occasional mental agitations—whether this was done in so civil a manner as to encourage the girl to eat.

Mrs. Rory, indeed, was always making allusions before her lodger, to the hard-

ship of the times for poor folks, and to the difficulty of supporting a family, and hinting her scorn of all "sorners," and mean-spirited individuals who were content to live at other people's expense. Nelly, of course, understood what this meant, and more than once she was on the point of rising and leaving the house where she was so unwelcome an inmate,—but where could she go? She was weak and penniless; she had not courage, and her pride gave way.

"Oh, mother, mother!" she would often bitterly think, "how you would have nursed and tended me in my weakness, and how you would have kissed and fondled my poor baby, if it had been but honestly born!"

Mrs. Rory, indeed, intended by her taunts to force the girl to leave her of her own accord. This failing, she changed

her tactics, and threatened if Nelly did not immediately return to her parents she herself would use means to inform them of her disgrace. She alluded forcibly to the sinfulness of the deception practised upon them, as if her own conscience upbraided her for consenting to it.

“I canna stand it ony langer,” she said, with an appearance of virtuous indignation, “it’s just weighing on my conscience; sae make up your mind, lassie, whether you’ll tell them or let me.”

“Oh, for pity’s sake! hae patience, Mrs. Rory,” Nelly exclaimed, horror-struck by the alternative, “hae patience, and something’ll maybe turn up yet.”

“Patience, indeed!” said Mrs. Rory, indignantly, and with a toss of her head, “na, na, my woman, there’s been ower muckle o’ that already; and as to something turning

up, it'll be on the morn come never. But there's ae thing in your power to do," here she hesitated for some reason or other, while Nelly looked anxiously and timidly on her, as if dreading the proposal about to be made.

"Get rid o' your bairn," said Mrs. Rory at length, boldly, as if plain-dealing was best. "Ye silly tawpie, I dinna mean ye to put hands on't—ye needna look sae skeared. But leave't, as mony like you has done, at somebody's door, for either them or the parish to bring up; and then I'll try to get a place for ye, and wait till your wages are due to be paid."

Nelly shuddered as she listened — she had turned deadly pale at first. She looked down on the baby sleeping on her knee, and by a sudden impulse clasped it to her bosom.

“ Oh, Mrs. Rory, I dinna think I could do that,” she said with a low, gasping voice, for her heart failed within her.

“ Then what are ye to do ?” exclaimed Mrs. Rory, with great disgust, for she was quite ready for a quarrel. “ Ye dinna expect I’m to keep ye here ony mair, do ye ?—I hae kept ye ower lang already for that matter. I’ll tell ye what it is, Nelly Armstrong—ye have nae business, after bringing yoursell to this pass, to have fine feelings, and ‘ canna do this’s,’ about onything. There’s naething else for ye, than either to gang hame to your father’s, or do as I advise ye. And it’ll no be so easy to get ye a place. I’ll need a’ my wits to manage it—mistresses turn up their noses at such as you, I can tell ye.”

“ But, maybe, Mrs. Rory,” said poor Nelly, tremblingly, “ I may get a nursing yet—

I think I'm stronger — and then I would be able to pay you, and to see my poor bairn now and then as you said that the tailor's wife at the corner would be willing to take it, if I could but gie her the money she asks."

"Lassie, ye'll never get a nursing— Woman, look at your bairn; see what a poor, shrivelled, deeing-looking thing it is!"

Nelly did look at her child, and hot, silent tears rolled down her cheeks as she did so, and fell upon the old shawl in which it was wrapped. She had not many clothes to put upon it. She had cut down some of her own to make baby-things, but Mrs. Rory was jealous of this, looking to Nelly's box and its contents as her own property in case of non-payment.

“There’s no doubt,” continued Mrs. Rory—for Nelly had returned no answer to her remark upon the child—“there’s no doubt a wet-nursing, if ye were fit for’t, is the thing for ye. You would get higher wages than as a servant, and your folk would ken naething but that ye had gone to a new place, as you say there’s no likelihood o’ onybody frae Winstraelea—isna that what ye ca’t?—being in the town, and coming to see ye. And your bairn might dee—I dinna think there’s muckle chance o’ it living, to tell the truth—sae in the end ye would just be as if naething had happened. But it’s useless talking about it: ye’ll never get a wet-nursing; and as your bairn may live for months yet, I’m no gaun to keep ye here.”

Nelly sighed deeply.

“You’re just a downright fule,” again

resumed Mrs. Rory, waxing hotter and hotter as she proceeded; "and your folk are nae better, if they would make sic a work as you seem to dread their doing. One would think a lassie never had a misfortune before to listen to ye, or that ye were a' sancts out by yonder. What kind o' neebors hae ye at hame, that ye dread them sae muckle, I wonder?"

"Oh! Mrs. Rory, I couldna face them wi' my bairn in my arms—it would be waur than death to me; and it wad break my father and mother's hearts besides: they've aye been decent, kirk-going folk; and now that they've made him an elder—"

"Made him a gomeril!" exclaimed the angry Mrs. Rory, "for gomerils ye a' are, without exception. Break their hearts, quo she!—my certy! hearts are no so easy broken. But an end maun come to this.

Aince for a', my woman, just make up your mind to what I hae said, or out ye'll tramp the morn, as sure as I'm a living woman."

And flinging to the door behind her with great violence in the excitement of her feelings, Mrs. Rory betook herself to the shop; leaving Nelly in a state of wretchedness and terror which it is impossible to describe.

It was, indeed, an evening of misery; but Nelly could not believe that Mrs. Rory would be so hard-hearted as to fulfil her threat. She endeavoured to persuade herself that that person had uttered it in anger, and without premeditation. To desert her babe! No; no woman who was herself a mother, could offer such a counsel in earnest; and she clasped her child closer in her arms, and hushed it, if possible,

more tenderly than ever, as if to make it amends for the mere thought. But though Nelly gave Mrs. Rory credit for more feeling than she probably deserved, she was uneasy—restless. Her heart at intervals palpitated strangely, and she watched Mrs. Rory's countenance with anxious solicitude. But Mrs. Rory gave her few opportunities for examining it—she was most of the morning either in the shop or mangle-room; and the poor girl, who nervously hoped for some word of reconciliation to drop from her lips, was constantly doomed to disappointment. There was a lowering look, too, on her brow, when she did see her, that made Nelly's heart sink, though Mrs. Rory never appeared sensible of her presence. To be sure, of late, Nelly had acquired the habit of retiring out of the way of the family into the darkest corner of the room, that she might give as little trouble

as possible, or at least not interfere with their accommodation; and it might be that Mrs. Rory did not observe her.

The baby wailed occasionally—it often wailed—and Nelly anxiously endeavoured to soothe it, for fear it might annoy her hostess. But it was unnecessary—Mrs. Rory had become suddenly deaf, as well as blind. She used to complain, too, of the noise the child made. Could it be that an emotion of pity had awakened in her bosom towards the poor, feeble, half-starved infant, and its pale, frightened young mother?

Whatever misfortune had befallen Mrs. Rory's eyesight, it was certainly only a partial one, for she was perfectly aware of Mr. Rory's presence. She "huffed" and scolded him with even more energy than usual. Mr. Rory was evidently the safety-valve of Mrs. Rory's constitution. De-

prived of him, she must have died from repressed feeling, or at least been subject to fits.

Mr. Rory was this night in a peculiarly melancholy and dejected state of mind ; but when was Mr. Rory hilarious ? People did say that he had been known to enjoy himself at an early period of life, but that period was now so remote, that probably he had forgotten the sensation. He sat by the chimney corner in a very meek and subdued attitude, his eyes fixed earnestly upon the fire, and starting at every sudden noise and opening door. These did not always herald Mrs. Rory's approach, however ; and it was wonderful how relieved the little man seemed when he discovered his mistakes.

The children were all assembled round the hearth, but they had learnt from experience



floor to the corner where Nelly was sitting weeping.

“Is anything wrong the night?” he whispered.

Nelly looked up; she could not answer him—she only shook her head while the tears ran over her cheeks.

“Ay, ay—I see, I see—poor thing, poor thing!” murmured the dejected little man, gently patting the now sleeping baby; “but ye must just set a stout heart to’t like me—just like me.”

And then he hurried back to his seat; and when his wife entered a few minutes after, he was gazing into the fire as immovably as before.

Nelly at length stole off to her dark closet, without her hostess having deigned to notice her since their important conversation. Fatigue only induced sleep towards the morning.

to respect their mother's "nerves" also. They were all quiet, with the exception of the precocious Dick, who huddled beneath the table, was sobbing in a low, but determined key.

He had unfortunately crossed the maternal path a short time before, and the reward of his imprudence had been a violent shove to the side, which sent him reeling against the wall. No one ventured to commiserate Dick, or to coax him from the place of refuge he had chosen; not even his father, who was fond of him. But poor Mr. Rory, as he sat looking steadily into the fire, now and then heaved a deep sigh that told a tale.

Once he looked cautiously round; and being convinced that his wife was not approaching the room, he rose, and crossed the

floor to the corner where Nelly was sitting weeping.

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And there she lay, with her baby in her bosom, as wretched and repentant a creature as sin and shame ever produced on this earth.

CHAPTER II.

It was a cold March evening. The sharp, biting east wind was sweeping in furious gusts along the streets, and retarding passengers at the corners. Nothing but necessity could have induced one to venture out of doors. The lamplighters had begun their work, and were getting over it quickly—more quickly than usual. Clouds of dust were occasionally whirled aloft in the air, and driven suddenly in the faces of pedes-

trians, blinding and stifling them, and fairly compelling them to turn their backs to windward till the blast had swept on.

Men were fighting with the wind, butting it, as it were, with lowered heads and bending figures, and getting irritated with its resistance. Hats that had not other means of fastening, were obliged to be held on by their owners' exertions; and all faces looked blue, withered, and even peevish, from exposure to the cutting breeze.

It was an evening for warm clothing and a blazing fire to all who could afford them. The gas-jets that were gradually starting into light in shop-windows and along pavements, were suggestive of cheerful interiors, and of cosy family circles. And numerous glimpses of such could be caught by the envious pedestrian while hurrying along the cold streets, as servants were lighting rooms and closing

shutters. Such momentary views made the open air keener than before by contrast, and he would button himself more closely up, and, execrating the bitterness of the wind which penetrated even through his ample garments, would push his way on with sullen and dogged determination.

Ah ! that vicious and malevolent east wind, how it does tyrannize and riot in our old northern city ! Bearing on its wings the raw mists of the ocean over which it has passed—laden with rheumatism, catarrh, and hollow-eyed consumption, it descends upon us ; and childhood, manhood, and old age sink beneath its influence. Like the simoom of the desert, there is destruction in its breath. It blights the early promise of the spring, which hides her affrighted head before it ; and alas ! alas ! it too often blasts the loveliest of our human flowers, and lays them in an untimely grave.

Misanthropy is its offspring, ill-favoured, unloving, and selfish. It is an enemy to beauty; the fairest complexion grows livid and dull at its touch—it makes eyes dim, and noses red. It disarms wit of its sting—gaiety evaporates before it. It is the genius of toothache, and the encourager of woollen manufactures. It delights in aches, low spirits, asthma, coughs, sneezings, and bronchitis. In short, it is emphatically that “ill wind which blows nobody good.”

It is cruel to the poor and the scantily clad. Did we penetrate through the labyrinths of those lofty, grim piles of buildings, whose picturesqueness arrests and charms the eye of the artist, what scenes should we witness there during its reign! Families crowded in bare, unfurnished, crumbling apartments; some even in cellars, where the light of day can only obtain entrance

through the open door—foodless, fireless, bedless, almost naked, huddling together on the cold dirty floor, that thus some little heat may be maintained among them. These may be the dregs of mankind, the vicious off-scourings of society; but they are human beings like ourselves, they suffer from the same causes, and they need our help.

Or there are others, poor but decent, thinly-clothed but respectable, in yonder piles. The seamstress toiling with wan and chilled fingers, in her solitary room, by the small fire she can hardly afford to burn; the pale, subdued artizan, with his large and pining family; the old, and frail, and bed-ridden, who have all striven, or are still striving to earn an honest livelihood, and who, at least, have never yet been reduced to beg. Let us think of them when the east wind is whistling round our houses,

searching out every cranny, every ill-fitting door and window, and we are assembled in our warm, carpeted, and curtained rooms ! Let us think of them, dear friends !

The evening to which we have just alluded, was free from mist, though bitterly keen. Daylight had gradually taken its departure, and the first star was feebly twinkling in the west. The lamplighters had now finished their work, and every minute was adding to the brilliancy of the gas-burners in the streets and shop-windows.

A young woman, not over-well clad for the season, and carrying a baby in her arms, which she was endeavouring to screen from the wind, was feebly walking up the west side of Frederick Street, where the gardens separate Queen Street from Heriot Row. She was evidently fearful of attracting observation, for she started at every footstep

behind her ; and yet there were times when she paused and turned towards passengers, as if meditating addressing them. No one observed these movements, however ; all but herself were hurrying on, and too earnest in struggling with the wind to attend to their neighbours. Besides, the attempts to attract their notice were so timid and undecided, that it was not wonderful they failed to do so on such an evening.

She had been walking along the streets of the New Town in this manner for hours, only occasionally sitting down to rest herself on door-steps, or by garden-railings, and she was much exhausted. Her baby, too, was suffering from cold, and perhaps some other cause, for it often wailed bitterly. She was very patient and gentle with it, however ; its cries only

seemed to distress her, and again and again she paused to draw her shawl more closely around it, and to nurse it. But alas! the spring which should have supplied its wants was certainly failing; for the child was not soothed—it was evidently suffering from hunger as well as cold.

The mother's face was young, but pale, and thin, and strangely hopeless. As she moved through the circle of light shed round each lamp-post—though in general she kept instinctively in the shade—more than one passer-by was startled by the expression which it revealed to them. But they forgot it the next minute, when the wind met them at the crossing, concentrating their whole thoughts upon its bitterness. If obedient to their momentary impulse, they had paused and

accosted her who had thus caught their attention, it might have saved Nelly Armstrong from a wretchedness they would have shuddered to contemplate.

Yes, it was Nelly who was thus wandering along the cold streets of Edinburgh with her child in her arms. Mrs. Rory had fulfilled her threat. During the afternoon she had expelled her from her house; and since that time the poor girl had been walking in a state of half-stupefaction about the streets.

Mrs. Rory had some conscience; for though she retained Nelly's clothes, she gave her a shilling to provide for her immediate wants.

"You ken the way back to your father's I suppose?" she said, coolly, as she dismissed her from the door. "At ony rate youv'e gotten a Scotch tongue in your head, and ye can speer for't."

So saying, she shut the door in Nelly's face, and went quietly about her usual business, undisturbed with any conjectures about the probable fate of her unhappy lodger.

Nelly moved away from Mrs. Rory's door with feet that only mechanically did their office. She knew not in what direction she was going. Mrs. Rory's words had fallen upon a paralyzed ear, scarcely capable of conveying impressions to the mind. She retained the shilling in her hand without knowing what she held there, or thinking of examining.

At last she was wearied, and she sat down on a door-step and began to nurse her child. Slowly her thoughts became less confused and more capable of arrangement while sitting there. She felt now the certainty, which at first she could not realize, that she was cast out by Mrs. Rory, and that she had no place to go to. The

idea was a dreadful one. Homeless on the streets! she who had a home and parents! —could it be that she had come to this? Then came the partial remembrance of Mrs. Rory's words. "I think she bade me gang hame to my father's," mused Nelly, and she shivered and grew deadly pale at the idea. She tried to picture the reception she might meet with there; but it ended with her starting up, and hurrying on as if to dispel the vision she had conjured up.

Alas! it was not in Nelly's power to return to Winstraelea that night, even if willing. There was no coach, except ~~one~~ in the morning; but Mrs. Rory had taken no trouble to inquire this before dismissing the girl to a home fifty miles distant.

Ere long Nelly again paused, and tried to consider; but she was weak and un-

accustomed to exercise, and it was not easy to compose her thoughts for the purpose.

“If she would but take me in again for a night or twa, I would try to make up my mind to tell them, though I couldna gang hame and meet them,” was the feeling of her mind. “Oh, how I wish I hadna deceived them at the first!”

Actuated by this idea, she began slowly to retrace her steps to Mrs. Rory’s. It was very timidly and doubtfully, and the nearer she drew to the place the oftener did she linger and hesitate. Again and again she considered what she would say to move Mrs. Rory. Her courage almost failed her; but at length summoning all she had to her aid—and desperation gave her some for the moment—she ventured to enter the shop.

Mrs. Rory was behind her counter, and her countenance instantly flushed a fiery red as she saw the trembling girl on the threshold.

“Get out o’ my shop this minute!” she exclaimed fiercely. “What’s brought you back again? I thought I had seen the last o’ ye!”

“Oh, Mrs. Rory!” said Nelly, in such earnest, faltering accents as might have moved her, “only take me in another night, and I’ll never trouble you again.”

“Take yourself off this blessed minute, ye sorning gipsy,” interrupted Mrs. Rory, making her way hastily round the counter to enforce her order, “or I’ll gie ye up to the police. Ye’ll get a night’s lodging from them I’s warrant; or ye can gang to the man that’s brought ye to this pass, and ask him to meat and lodge ye. Awa, I say!”

And she approached her in so threatening an attitude, that the poor, terrified girl without again venturing to appeal to her, hurried away from the shop.

“ Dear me, what’s the matter, Mrs. Rory ?” inquired a customer who entered at this moment, “ is onything wrang ?”

“ It’s naething at a’, Mrs. M^cGlashan,” said the former, returning behind the counter, and endeavouring to compose her features ; “ it’s naething but an ill-doing cutty I was ordering frae the door. The town’s just fu o’ such, and folk in my line need to be particular, I’m sure, if they expect to keep up the character of their shop. It’s dreadfu’ to think o’ the wickedness in a city like this.” And she shook her head in the most approved style, and groaned audibly.

“ ’Deed, it’s ower true,” said the other, and

she also expressed her disgust and sympathy in the same manner.

Nelly's heart sunk within her as she turned the second time from Mrs. Rory's door. There was no hope of even a temporary shelter from her. A kind of instinct led her to take the old direction—Stock-bridge. It was not that she thought of applying to her former mistress, but that she was most familiar with that locality. Still, though with no purpose, as I have said, she went straight on to Danube Street, but when she came to the entrance of it she paused. She looked wistfully along the little street towards Mrs. Elliot's house. They were closing the shutters there, and she watched them do so with almost a feeling of curiosity. She speculated as to whether it was Martha or the new servant who was thus occupied, and she sat down on the steps.

of the corner house while she did so, wondering at her own apathy. But her mind was wandering; the tension for some time had been too great.

She sat till the cold made her baby cry, and then she rose and walked slowly away, looking back often, however, to the house, as if it were a friend, and with the feeling in her heart that if she applied for admittance there she would not be rejected.

"But I canna do it; I canna do it," she said, as she moved away.

She was soon toiling up the ascent from Stockbridge. Her step was heavier now; her eye was wild and unsettled. The lights were appearing in the shops. She entered a baker's and bought some bread with a part of the shilling. She was faint with cold, hunger, and fatigue, and she ate the bread ravenously, as again she crept on with

her burden in her arms through the sharp east wind. She knew not where to procure a lodging. Her heart grew heavier and heavier, and she began to wish that she could lie down in some obscure corner and die, she and her child together. She wondered, supposing such an end was before her, if her parents ever would know of it; and, if they did, what their feelings would be, learning of her death and disgrace at the same time—they would surely forgive her. There was a nervous tightening of her throat, and a rush of tears to her eyes at this idea; but the tears remained there, and did not relieve her poor oppressed heart. In her extremity she would willingly have applied to her seducer, whose child she bore in her arms; but she had no clue to his place of abode, though, if she had found it, she would most probably have

been repulsed. Of all her former associates in Mr. Maxwell Grey's, there was no one to whom she could have recourse in this the hour of her distress. Their acquaintance had ceased from the day she was dismissed from her situation. The unmoved looks of the people she passed in the streets were dreadful to her. She felt as if they all must read her situation in her face, and that they had no pity. Neither had the shopkeepers, as they laughed and chatted with their customers. Wistfully she gazed, as she proceeded, into fire-lit rooms, envying servants who were going about their work in kitchens and laundries, and thinking every one happy but herself.

As night was settling down, she began to have a wild dread of being noticed by the police. Though sinking with fatigue, she feared to rest herself, lest one of them might observe

and accost her: she had seen them do so often to poor outcast creatures. She expected every moment that a hand would be laid on her shoulder, and she tried to assume the look of a person who had some business on hand, and walked steadily on instead of pacing up and down, as latterly she had half unconsciously been doing. Weary, weary, weary! Light as her baby was, it felt like lead in her feeble arms. Its wailings too were not to be hushed, for the cold air penetrated through the shawl, and its usual nourishment was exhausted.

She once ventured into a small, obscure shop, and in a trembling voice inquired of the woman there if she could direct her to a decent, humble lodging. But as she came to purchase nothing, the person answered coldly in the negative, after examining her with a suspicious look. She also tried

at length, in her despair, to accost the people she met, and ask them to help her. There must be some kind-hearted persons among them, she thought, who would pity and assist her when she told she was homeless, and ignorant of where she could procure a lodging. She began to study the countenances of those whom she saw approaching, in hopes of reading benevolence in them. But the people all walked so quickly, on account of the cold, and were so occupied with resisting the wind, that she never succeeded in stopping those who, she thought, were likely to befriend her. Besides, her attempts were very timid. Once, indeed, she contrived to arrest the progress of one of her own sex; but in answer to her humble gesture of entreaty, the lady shook her head and passed heedlessly on. Oh! the anguish of that moment to Nelly!

Her efforts proved all so unsuccessful that at last she relinquished them in despair, and began to feel almost indifferent as to what became of her. This was partly the effect of cold, which was gradually stupifying and benumbing her senses. She had done all she could for her own relief: but all was in vain. She could make no further exertion; she did not care whether she died or lived—the world was a cruel place.

Suddenly an idea darted into her mind. It was, that she would be fully justified in putting an end to her existence at once, and thus escape the lengthening out of her misery. It recurred again and again, and she thought of it with fearful avidity—she almost welcomed it. The sea—but she had not strength to reach it. The bridges—a plunge over, with her baby in her arms, and all would be instantly over—and there

was a terrible satisfaction in the idea that her cruel seducer would learn her fate. She would haunt him—haunt him with remorse and an awakened conscience, that would never let him rest, and which would exact fearful retribution for the wrongs that had driven her to desperation.

Her steps were on the way to death—her imagination was gloating over the thought of vengeance, when she suddenly shuddered, paused, and finally returned down the hill.

It was the vision of an *hereafter* that had flashed upon her mind. Early religious training had done little for Nelly till now—now it saved her from self-destruction.

“No; I darena rush unbidden into the presence of God,” she murmured, with quivering lips; “and death, I feel, willna be lang o’ coming o’ his ainsell.”

She walked feebly on, resolving to seek

a shelter in the first common staircase, and there to lie down and die, if it was God's will.

She was now again in Frederick Street, creeping faintly on in the shade of the trees. She no longer looked at the people who passed her; she was hopeless of succour from them. There were few on the streets: it was past nine o'clock, and most seemed to prefer the other side of the way.

She was about half-way down, when an old woman came slowly toiling up the ascent, with a heavy basket on her arm. Notwithstanding the wind, which gave her much trouble to retain her dark, faded cloak comfortably around her, her keen eyes overlooked nothing on the road, and they were fastened inquisitively on Nelly as she approached her. The old woman did not recognise her at first, though they were old acquaintances; still she examined the young girl's appearance

attentively, as if somewhat puzzled by her recollections. Nelly did not observe this, however ; her eyes were growing rapidly dim with exhaustion.

The old woman allowed the girl to pass her ; but she had no sooner done so, than she wheeled round, and followed stealthily in her track. It was easy to overtake her ; and then walking by her side, she furtively scrutinized her countenance by the light of the lamps. A few minutes satisfied her that her suspicions were right.

Nelly started violently and stood still, as the touch of a hand was felt on her arm. She then tried to remove the mist from her sight, but it remained dim ; but old Leezie's voice the next moment made her recognise her former acquaintance, and it was with thankfulness unutterable she did so. The desire of life was not extinguished in her

breast—at least, it was easily rekindled; and the wretched old woman's voice seemed that of a friend.

“Is't possible this is you, Nelly Armstrong?” it said, with all its former blandness, but mingled with wonder.

“Yes, it's me, Leezie,” she feebly articulated.

“And what do ye look sae white and like a ghost for?—I was hardly sure o' ye, even at the last. And whaur are ye gaun on this cauld night—hame?”

“I hae nae hame, Leezie,” said the poor young girl, in a tone of quiet despair, while she leaned against the garden railing to steady herself.

“Say ye sae?” replied the old woman, briskly; “but ye're joking wi' me. I heard o' your misfortune, and whaur you had gane. She and you haena cast out—have ye?”

"She turned me to the door this afternoon," said the girl; "and I have been wandering about the streets ever since with my bairn. I have forgotten how to joke now, Leezie."

"Ye'll learn't again, hinny, ye'll learn't again. But come, tell me a'—auld Leezie is na the warst freend ye can trust in. Your man has cast ye aff, too, it's like."

"That's an auld story now, Leezie," said Nelly, bitterly.

"Ay, he's a bad ane; but a' men arena like him. And your folk—what about them, dearie, what about them?"

"They ken naething about me, Leezie. Shame wouldna let me tell them. Oh! what would my poor mother think if she could see me the night?"

"Whisht, dearie, whisht! Dinna tak on

sae. And sae they ken naething about it?"

"Naething; but if I live to the morn, I maun try to tell them."

"The morn?"

"Ay, I maun try. But where to gang this night, I canna tell. Oh, Leezie, if ye have ony pity, show me some place where I can lay my head, or I maun die on the streets — my heart is fast failing me."

"Ay, ay, ay," repeated the old woman, eagerly and coaxingly; "we'll do our best, hinny—we'll do our best. No that ye will be very weel lodged in auld Leezie Brown's house; but ye'll no mind that, dearie, ye'll no mind that."

"Oh! God bless you, Leezie! Ony place—ony place. I carena where it is if it's out of the cauld street."

"It's a poor bield for one like you, Nelly, and it's a gey step to it; but you're welcome as flowers in May. Nae fear o' auld Leezie turning ye out — she has mair mense. Ha, ha, ha!"

And the old woman laughed and chuckled strangely.

"But come your ways — come your ways," she said, moving on, when she had composed herself; "I would offer to carry your bairn for ye, but that I'm auld, dearie, and there's the basket. Ohon—aye! it's been a lang day's darg this; but it's been a lucky ane since I hae met wi' you, Nelly. Take time, take time. Waes me! how your bairnie wails!"

"It's cauld and hungry," said Nelly, mournfully, as she walked carefully by the side of the old woman, afraid she might yet desert her.

"We'll get it warmed and fed belyve, hinny. Hech, Sirs! this weary wind—it'll be the death o' an auld creature like me!"

"Is your house far from this, Leezie?" timidly inquired Nelly, after a few minutes of silent progress.

"It's in Blackfriars Wynd, hinny. Ye'll maybe never have been there."

"I canna mind," said Nelly, humbly.

"It's aff the High Street and Cowgate. Puir folk like me hae to put up wi' thae places; but I'm content, hinny—I'm content."

And she again peered in her companion's face, and chuckled as before.

On the pair went, each keeping a vigilant but unsuspected watch over the other. Nelly was afraid old Leezie might repent of her offer of shelter; the old woman that her prey might yet be snatched from

her. The girl, notwithstanding her fatigue, was able to drag on her limbs to suit the other's pace; for old as she was, Leezie showed considerable activity at present, and trotted smartly on, though always cautioning the girl to "take time," and "not to hurry herself." Ascending the hill the wind was in their favour, and helped them; but it was otherwise at the corners of the streets, for there it seemed to blow from all directions, and defied all tacking and calculations. Nelly could not have turned them without Leezie's assistance. Grasping the girl's arm, the old woman pulled her on, though almost breathless with her own exertions; nor did she release her hold during the rest of the way, under the pretence that her aid was necessary.

Prince's Street, to Leezie's satisfaction,

was losing some of its brilliancy as they reached it. Some shops were already closed, and others were closing. As usual, the street was crowded ; but the pair immediately sought the quieter side, and were able to proceed without inconvenience. The sky was glittering with stars. The lofty houses of the Old Town, with their numerous ranges of windows, had at this hour the appearance of being illuminated. Lights twinkled from garret to basement. A loud, clear whistle—and a railway train came snorting along the hollow, from the west ; its red, raining cinders making a fiery glow upon the ground as it glided towards the terminus. Cabs and carriages were dashing along, oyster-girls were uttering their wild but musical cry of “ caller oy ;” and Nelly, giddy and confused with the noise, light, and bustle, and with the wear and tear of both mind and body during the

last few hours, could not have proceeded further but for Leezie's active assistance.

At length they reached the North Bridge, and Nelly shuddered as she glanced over the parapet into the dark depth beneath. A little way beyond the bridge was the High Street, where the confusion and din far surpassed that of the more aristocratic thoroughfare which they had lately traversed. It was Saturday night, and business was at its height. Not only were the shops open, but the street was thronged with vendors of all sorts of coarse provisions, lumps of old cheese, eggs, stale fish, &c. These were piled on hand-barrows, each of which carried a small lantern to display the goods and facilitate sale. By order of the police, they had to keep constantly moving, and the appearance of so many

wandering lights on the street had a singular effect. Gas glared from shop-windows and doors—there was a blaze almost like noon-day from one quarter of the street to the other, but especially in the neighbourhood of the cross. There were also numerous hawkers, who carried baskets filled with apples, crockery, and petty haberdashery ; and ragged children of both sexes ran up and down, annoying the passengers by pressing their goods upon them. It was a Babel for noise and confusion. The ear was constantly stunned by the rumbling of coal-carts, the cries of carters, fishwomen, and ballad-sellers, mingled together in one unintelligible roar.

In addition to the sellers, there were those who had come to purchase. The street indeed seemed a mass of living beings. Poor men's wives, having just received their

husbands' wages—perhaps only a small portion of them, for Saturday night is a lucrative time for the publican—were driving hard bargains for cheap articles of food. All the idle, vicious, and destitute population within the town seemed also assembled—every close mouth and low-browed doorway was bristling with their faces. And such faces !

Through this heterogeneous mass did old Leezie drag Nelly by main force, and then pursued her way along the pavement towards the east, only occasionally noticing an acquaintance in passing. She never paused. Nelly clung to her, terrified by the crowd and the noises on every side. At last they arrived at an arched entrance to a gloomy-looking alley, which the eye could not penetrate.

“ This is Blackfriars Wynd, hinny,” said old Leezie, encouragingly : “ we’re just at hame.”

It was a home Nelly would once have fled from. But now, shelter, rest—she cared for nothing else, nor was she scarcely aware whither she was being led; she moved mechanically.

“Take tent to your feet, dearie,” said the old woman, as they entered the archway, “it’s rather rough walking here.”

It was rough, and dirty, and dark. But the darkness was favourable, for in some degree concealing the squalor. Down they stumbled through the Wynd. Lofty houses on either side, from garret to cellar swarming with life—mean, suspicious-looking shops, whiskey-cellars, pawn-shops, rag-stores. Riot, din, confusion everywhere. Drunken men and women fighting and blaspheming on the foul, uneven causeway; children squalling; policemen interfering; young girls whom vice had made

old in face, jeering and laughing amidst the crowd with shameless effrontery. Oh ! it was a sight to make the heart sink and the blood run cold ! It was as if one was suddenly plunged into Pandemonium, without preparation to mingle in the horrors there.

"Here we're at last, dearie," the old woman's voice said in Nelly's shuddering ear. They were at the entrance to a dark, spiral staircase in one of the grim old buildings.

"Take a firm hold o' my cloak, dearie, for fear ye trip in the dark," said Leezie ; "it's but twa stairs up—we'll be there in another minute."

Up they mounted, Nelly clinging to the old woman with one hand, and supporting her crying babe with the other. They passed a door, through whose crevices a light gleamed, and assisted them on their further

way. They at last reached what seemed a narrow landing-place, but here it was total darkness. The old woman, however, hastily flung open a door, and a strong gleam of light broke on the gloomy passage.

"Welcome to my poor house, dearie," she said, as Nelly feebly followed her into the room.

It was a small, dirty, low-ceiled apartment, pannelled with wood, black with smoke and age. Two uninviting truckle beds nearly filled it up. The rest of the furniture was proportionably miserable. A blazing fire, however, was in the grate, beneath a chimney-piece still massy and rich with mutilated carving. Three strange-looking, tawdry, disorderly women were seated around it. They stared boldly at the intruder.

“Get up, dearies,” said the old woman, winking and nodding to them; “here’s a friend that needs the fire.”

They yielded instantly, and made room for Nelly, who, sinking suddenly down on one of the seats, would have dropped her child on the floor if one of the women had not fortunately caught it. She had fainted.

Nelly Armstrong was the fly in the spider’s den.

CHAPTER III.

THOMAS ARMSTRONG and his wife had begun to be uneasy at their daughter's silence. By ceasing to write to her, they had intended to signify their just resentment for her selfish and undutiful behaviour. But parents' hearts are soon softened; and ere long they again wrote to her, as if all were forgotten. But week after week passed on without bringing them an answer, and at last they grew perplexed and anxious. They would have been angry,

but for their fears. The very indefinite nature of those fears made them more intolerable. Mrs. Armstrong brooded over them as she sat alone by her cottage fire, while her husband and son were absent at their work. Her eyes had become too weak for needlework, and idle hands and an anxious mind go often in company. More than two years had elapsed since she had parted with her daughter. Her forebodings at that time had been confirmed. Nelly had lost all relish for her father's humble roof. She had evidently no wish to return to it; and if compelled to do so, it would be, the mother feared, to pine after the gayer scenes to which her heart inclined.

But this was not all : Mrs. Armstrong remembered Nelly's coquettish ways, and she now began to suspect that she had formed an attachment in town. If so, she

would naturally be unwilling to be separated from her lover; and Mrs. Armstrong was inclined to believe this rather than that her daughter was positively undutiful.

“It will be the same as parting with her for ever,” thought the poor mother, who never dreamt of Nelly’s lapse from virtue, for was she not still in Mrs. Maxwell Grey’s service? “If she settles there, we may meet once in two or three years, if we are spared, but hardly oftener. But I wish I knew something certain about it, and maybe that good lady whom Nelly first lived with would inquire if Miss Archer asked her.”

Miss Archer was often at Mrs. Armstrong’s cottage. She was sorry for the poor, lonely, desponding mother, and much disappointed in Nelly. Once she would not have believed that the girl could be so

wanting in propriety and natural affection as she had now shown herself. There was no doubt that Mrs. Armstrong was losing her eyesight, and she had no one to help her but her rough neighbours of the Row. The mother, she saw, felt deeply her daughter's neglect, though it was a subject she seldom alluded to; she could not bear to blame Nelly to another. Miss Archer, the most unsuspecting of human beings, could not imagine what inducement the girl could find in town to make her so unwilling to leave it; but when Mrs. Armstrong at length hinted her suspicion of some attachment, it threw a new light on the subject altogether, and much relieved Miss Archer's mind, by enabling her so far to acquit Nelly. It must be the case, for the girl had always been a good-hearted girl, and two years

could not have changed her disposition. Her affections were certainly entangled—Miss Archer believed it firmly.

Most readily she engaged to write to Mrs. Elliot, and request her to interrogate Nelly on the subject. She did so, indeed, whenever she reached home, and looked forward to an answer with much interest. It arrived after the interval of a week, but Miss Archer's face became suddenly pale as she read it; and when she had finished it, she walked up and down her little parlour, wringing her hands. Its contents were truly overwhelming to the kind-hearted lady.

Mrs. Elliot, after preparing Miss Archer for some painful intelligence, said she had called at Mrs. Maxwell Grey's, as she had requested, and inquired for Nelly Armstrong, but was informed by the servant that no person of that name resided there. Sur-

prised and alarmed by this information, she then expressed a wish to see Mrs. Maxwell Grey, who was fortunately at home. Mrs. Elliot here repeated the account she had obtained from that lady of Nelly's conduct when in her service, and of her ignominious dismissal.

"I found," continued Mrs. Elliot, "upon closely questioning her, that when she dismissed her, she made no inquiry as to where the girl meant to take refuge, supposing she would return to her friends. I was indeed much distressed to learn this, as upwards of nine months have elapsed since that time; and what had become of the unfortunate young woman I shuddered to contemplate. I was extremely anxious, you may believe, to try every means of throwing light upon this point; and finding that two of Nelly's fellow-servants were still in the family, I re-

quested permission to see them. One of them, a respectable-looking person—the nursery-maid, I imagine—could only inform me of the name of Nelly's seducer, who is the same young man whom I mentioned to you as having been seen in her company. The other servant, who is the cook, I cannot but think, knows more than she will admit, but has some reason for preserving silence. Her answers, at least, were contradictory, and her manner confused and insolent. I contrived to extract from her, however, that she had directed Nelly to lodgings. While examining her, it occurred to me that you had mentioned that Nelly had not till lately ceased to correspond with her parents, or they with her; and that they understood she was still in Mrs. Maxwell Grey's service. I stated this fact to the cook, but though her countenance manifestly convicted her

of falsehood, she denied ever having seen the letters, or having been instrumental in any way in forwarding them.

“ Finding that I could not prevail upon her to confess, I took a note of the lodgings she had recommended to Nelly, and went there immediately. I found the keeper of them a greengrocer, in —— Street, and, I grieve to say, a woman whose character is not considered respectable; so, at least, I have since learned. On making known my business, she hesitated and coloured, and seemed, I thought, preparing to deny that such a person had been received by her; but I would not allow her to evade me, and at last she reluctantly confessed that a young girl of the name I mentioned had occupied her lodgings for some time, and had borne a child there; but that she had left them two months after that event—that is only some six weeks ago—

with the intention of returning to her father's. She had supplied her with money for that purpose, she said, and she had received nothing for the girl's lodging and board for many a day, save a few old clothes; so she hoped the friends meant to recompense her, as Nelly had solemnly promised they would. She persisted in this story, so I was forced to receive it. But if the girl left her house, as she affirms, to go to her father's, why has she never arrived there? What has become of her?

“Dear Miss Archer, my heart sadly accuses me for tempting her away from her native place. If exertion of mine can discover and reclaim her, be assured it will not be wanting. But alas! alas! I fear Nelly has fallen into a deeper pit than even Mrs. Maxwell Grey imagines. What responsibility rests upon the mistress of a household! I have always felt so. If Mrs. Maxwell Grey—but I will not

reflect upon her. Nelly was too giddy a girl for a situation in so gay and thoughtless a family."

Mrs. Elliot went on to say, that her next step was to discover the whereabouts of the young man who had been Nelly's seducer, as there was a probability that he might yet be in correspondence with her.

"I employed for this purpose," wrote Mrs. Elliot, "our good friend Mr. Duncan, the missionary—you remember him, the devoted, excellent man. He had some difficulty in tracing him; but at last he discovered him through Messrs. —, his employers, and obtained an interview. But it was of no avail. He denies all knowledge of her either past or present, and was extremely rude to Mr Duncan. The lodging-house keeper assured me, that no person of his description had ever visited Nelly while she resided with her, so—

if the woman spoke the truth—it may be that he now knows nothing of her. One false step, and the downward course is fearfully rapid, I am aware. God grant she may be recovered ere it is too late!

“There is one dreadful idea that at this period occurred to me, and perhaps it may to you—but if it does, you may banish it. The unfortunate girl, though much depressed in spirits, as I learnt from her landlady, cannot have committed suicide. I have made the most particular inquiries at the proper authorities; and no body answering to her description has been found. But the agents of vice in this, as in all large towns, are numerous, and Nelly may have fallen into their hands. I need not say, communicate this to the unfortunate parents as gently as possible. I feel deeply for them. Assure them of my sym-

pathy and assistance—the latter, indeed, they have a right to expect from me.”

It was a painful duty which devolved upon Miss Archer. Her sufferings in discharging it were scarcely inferior to those of the parents when they had learnt the contents of Mrs. Elliot’s letter. Poor Miss Archer had tried to prepare them for the disclosure; but the blow could not be softened. Her brother was unfortunately from home, or she would have requested him to break it to the father, and allow him to take his own time and way of communicating it to his wife. She dared not delay till his return. The father’s deep, silent grief, and the mother’s louder agony, were almost more than she could endure to witness.

“My bairn, my bairn! would to God I had been in my grave or I knew of this!”

the latter repeatedly exclaimed, wringing her hands, with the tears streaming from her nearly sightless eyes.

“Oh, be composed, be composed, Mrs. Armstrong!” said her weeping visitor, hanging over her, and half distracted with the sight of misery before her.

“Oh, Miss Archer, dinna speak to me of composure!” said the miserable mother. “I could have borne her death; I could have dressed her corpse wi’ my ain hands, and laid her in her coffin wi’ resignation—but this I canna bear. Oh! Thomas, Thomas,” she said, turning to her husband, “surely ye will gang to seek for her, and never rest till ye find her out, and bring her back to me? Thomas, ye will do this?”

“With God’s help I’ll do it, Matty,”

answered the father, in a solemn but trembling voice.

“ But without delay, Thomas—without delay ?”

“ I’ll take out my seat on the coach the morn, Matty, and be aff the next morning. Didna the maister say, Miss Archer, that he would be back by that time ?”

“ He did, Thomas.”

“ Then I can get awa. But now, Matty, let us have recourse to God, for it is He only who can sustain us at such a time.” And the old man throwing himself on his knees, the wife and visitor followed his example.

It was not only the natural cry of the creature in its hour of distress to its Creator—it was the appeal of the trusting and believing heart which had had long experience of the faithfulness and mercy of its God, that issued

from the father's lips as he knelt solemnly upon his cottage floor.

“ We know, O Lord,” ejaculated the afflicted old man, “ that all thy ways are in mercy and truth to Thy believing people, and that though no chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Give us faith to discern Thy face through this dark cloud of affliction ; and give us patience, that we may bear it as Thy professing servants should ! And O Lord !—O blessed Lord !—save the brand from the burning—snatch the prey from the spoiler, and let not the bairn of so many prayers be lost to us and Thee. Thou canst bring good out of this evil, even to her soul. Do it Thou, then, for Thine own name's sake, O Lord ! And though my

old eyes should not see it, bring her to repentance, and restore her to this poor dwelling, where once she was our pride and comfort."

His voice failed him—he could say no more. It was the triumph of faith over unbelief and parental agony. He rose from his knees; Miss Archer, and the mother, still weeping bitterly, but quieted and soothed in spirit, did the same; and their visitor, ere long, felt she had better leave them to indulge their sorrows alone together.

It was evening when she had visited them, having waited till Thomas returned from the coal-field. She had dismissed the young lad, their son, by a sign, when she entered the cottage. As she left it, she saw him coming back to add another to its sorrowful inmates.

Miss Archer's heart was rent, thinking of

their misery, and contemplating the fate of the unhappy Nelly. She had been accessory in removing her to town, and her tender but scrupulous conscience upbraided her for having been so. She passed a miserable night. There was no one to whom she could relieve her heart by speaking on the subject which engrossed it. Betty was not a person to discuss it with, or likely to suggest any plan for assisting the wretched father and mother in their search for their daughter. Miss Archer, had all confidence in Mrs. Elliot's zeal and energy, but she felt she would like to be on the spot herself, to be actively employed in the investigation. To be at such a distance was dreadful; the uncertainty and mystery hanging over the girl's fate seemed worse there where she could do nothing. But it was clearly her duty, she felt on reflection, to remain at home for the pur-

pose of supporting the poor mother's spirits, while her husband was absent searching for his lost daughter; and she determined to be ruled by this consideration. She longed impatiently for her brother's return. If he had been at home, Thomas Armstrong might have started that very day for town, and thus twenty-four hours been saved; but he was certain to be back that evening.

Sleep had never visited her eyes during the night. The hours had been spent in these ruminations, and in trying to devise plans for Nelly's discovery; but she could think of nothing definite. She had lived, when in town, a very retired life, neither her means nor connections allowing any other; and she was simplicity's self in regard to the vices and temptations of cities. She at length rose, languid and

fatigued, resolving, whenever she had breakfasted, to go to Mrs. Armstrong's cottage, and keep her company during the forenoon.

She was sitting dejectedly at her breakfast, about nine o'clock—a late hour for her, but her state of nervous depression had disturbed all her usual arrangements—when she heard a confused murmur of voices at a distance. She paid no attention to it, however; but presently she was startled by her old servant bursting into the room, in a state of great excitement.

“Eh, Miss Archer! do ye ken what has happened?” exclaimed Betty, whose face was unusually pale.

“Oh! hush, Betty—hush!” said poor Miss Archer, nervously, who instantly thought that the story of Nelly's disgrace had reached the village, and feeling at that moment utterly unable to allude to it.

“ There’s been an accident at the Whinney Braes’ Colliery, and they say poor auld Thomas Armstrong’s killed,” continued Betty, without attending to her mistress ; but the next moment she had cause to rue her precipitancy.

“ Merran ! Merran !” she screamed to her fellow-servant, at the pitch of her voice ; “ Merran, for ony sake, come here ; the mistress has fainted. Sirs ! to think I could hae done sae fulish a thing ! Oh ! Miss Archer, Miss Archer, look up, will ye ?— this is no like you. The mischief’s in that glaiket lassie, will she never think o’ coming ? Merran !—I say, Merran !”

But all her efforts could not make her neighbour hear, as she was at that moment hurrying up the avenue to learn more particulars about the accident of which they had just heard. Betty was at her wit’s end,

terrified to leave her mistress whom she was supporting, even to procure assistance.

“Eh, dear me, Captain!—is this you?” at length ejaculated Betty, much relieved, as alarmed by the cries which penetrated through the flooring to the house below, their military neighbour made his appearance on the threshold. It was the first time his presence had given her pleasure.

“What’s the matter—what’s the matter?” demanded the Captain, peeping cautiously in before entering, and astonished at the sight before him. Miss Archer had half-fallen from her chair, and lay insensible in her servant’s arms.

“Matter!—do ye no see that the mistress has fainted? Here, haud her up, will ye, Sir, till I rin for water and her smelling-bottle? Preserve us a’—wha ever saw her in a dwam before!”

“ But what made her faint ?” said the Captain, somewhat reluctantly advancing to perform the duty Betty had assigned to him—“ was she ill ?”

“ As weel as you or me. But I hae nae time for speaking the now.” And she was hurrying from the room.

“ Stop, stop !” cried the Captain suddenly, his courage entirely evaporating at the prospect of being left alone even for a few minutes with the corpse-like figure Betty had relinquished to him. “ Stop, stop !—I think after all it will be better if you hold her again yourself, and I will run down stairs and bring up either Mrs. McMurdo or the maid to help you.”

“ Bring up the deil—I daur ye, Sir, to bring ony such person here. Haud her up yourself, I say, and I’ll be back this minute ! The muckle, idle, faint-hearted

vagabond," she muttered to herself as she ran off, "he hasna the pluck o' a hen in him."

She was back instantly with the needful restoratives, and the Captain was relieved from what he considered a very disagreeable and alarming duty, which only his dread of Betty could have induced him to undertake. He could not leave the room in ordinary decency till Miss Archer recovered, but he remained at as great a distance as possible from the spot of action, ready to retreat at the first appearance of returning consciousness, wondering "what had put it into the old woman's head," so he irreverently styled Miss Archer—"to get up such a scene as this so suddenly," and thinking anxiously about his unfinished breakfast.

He did not require to wait till his

patience was quite exhausted. Water and strong aromatic vinegar gradually revived Miss Archer, and this was no sooner ascertained than the Captain bolted. Poor Miss Archer had received a dreadful shock, and the terrified Betty vowed privately that she would never again be so hasty in communicating evil intelligence.

"But wha was ever to think," said she to herself, "that she would take on sae, even though she aye made an unco' wark wi' the Armstrongs?"

But Betty was not aware that that unhappy family had been already plunged into the depths of distress, and that this other misfortune so rapidly succeeding the former, had been the cause of overwhelming her sympathising mistress. If she had, she would have been more cautious in her communication. Nelly's story had not yet become public.

When Miss Archer was able to listen, she asked for the particulars. But Betty had no very clear account to give, and was now careful in what she told. The nature of the accident she had not yet been able to learn, but that Thomas Armstrong had been killed, and no other individual, she was positive of.

The truth was, poor Thomas, whose duty, as I formerly mentioned, was to descend before any of the other workmen into the pit to ascertain its safety, had this morning, probably in the anxious and distressed state of his mind, neglected certain necessary precautions. The air of the pit had been rather impure for some days, and it was supposed that his lamp had come in contact with it. There had been an explosion though not a great one. But as he was alone it was all a matter of con-

jecture. The accident had occurred some hours before Miss Archer heard of it, and his lifeless body had already been discovered and conveyed home to his doubly-agonized wife, whom every one pitied without knowing to what extent she needed it. His son had been on the coal-field at the moment of the accident, and the boy's distress, Betty had heard, had been heart-rending.

Thus died Thomas Armstrong—truly a victim of his daughter's folly and guilt—for as a stone thrown into a lake will agitate all the bosom of the tranquil waters, so the consequences of a deviation from the path of virtue are seldom confined to the erring individual, but extend to others. He died lamented in his native village, where his pious and humble life had passed. But Miss Archer, with deep awe remembered his petition, "that though his eyes might not see

it, God would yet bring Nelly to repentance, and restore her to her home," and she believed it would be fulfilled.

"But if my brother had been at home this would not have happened," she thought in her affliction. "Oh God! how unsearchable are Thy judgments!"

CHAPTER IV.

MISS ARCHER's description of the late events at Winstraelea shocked and distressed Mrs. Elliot and her daughter. Such a tale of misery had never been equalled in their recollection. The sufferings of the widowed mother excited their unbounded sympathy. Mary Elliot's tears were ready to gush whenever she thought of them, and indeed for some time she could think of nothing else. She had taken an anxious interest in the inquiries made for the lost Nelly—lost in

more respects than one—but now she could not rest till she had lent her personal assistance to discover her. The girl had been attached to her, and she had been much prepossessed in her favour while she resided with them. All their efforts to trace her had as yet been unavailing. They had inquired at every police-station about her: but no wonder they failed. They had seen Nelly only in her days of gaiety and bloom, and no one who saw her now would have recognized her by their description.

At length something occurred which seemed to promise a clue. Martha was informed by the servant of a neighbouring family that while passing through a part of the Old Town one evening, she had seen Nelly or some one strongly resembling her. She was in company with several disreputable-looking women, and what nearly confirmed

the woman's suspicion was, that on the girl observing her she instantly darted down a side street and was lost to sight. The servant said she would have followed, knowing how anxious Mrs. Elliot was to hear news of her, but that she was afraid of her companions, and it was getting late.

It was her young mistress to whom Martha mentioned this circumstance, for Mrs. Elliot's health, always delicate, had begun to suffer from the fatigue and anxiety to which she had lately been exposed, and she had been confined for some days to her room.

"I should not wonder, Miss Elliot," said Martha, in conclusion, "but that the poor wretched lassie might be found in some of those dens of iniquity near to the place where Kirsty saw her. I once heard of a girl that was inveigled into the wynds, and was discovered by her friends by mere accident after

a whole year had passed by. It's a pity but that some one who knows her, and has boldness for it, would search there for her, if it was just for her poor mother's sake."

Martha's words had an effect which she little intended. Mary thought long and deeply over them. It was most desirable indeed that some one should attempt what Martha had proposed. But where was such a person to be found? It must be some one who could recognize the girl, and was possessed of some influence over her.

"I will go myself," was her determination at length. And though her cheek turned pale as she made it, her courage did not falter. She only feared her mother would not consent. Still, when the latter should hear Martha's story and her plan, Mary thought she might.

That plan was to visit the wynds and

closes of the Old Town in company with Mr. Duncan, the missionary. He laboured there daily, and could therefore supply her with all necessary information besides guiding and protecting her.

After due consideration, Mary communicated the intelligence she had received from Martha to her mother ; and when she had had time to think over it, she quietly proposed her plan. Mrs. Elliot was startled at first, as her daughter expected. She was silent for some time, and seemed reflecting on the subject.

“ I think the girl must have been mistaken,” she said, at length. “ More likely, Nelly is to be found somewhere in the New Town, in a place where we cannot penetrate. But we will leave nothing untried, love—only instead of you, I will go myself.”

“ You — you, mamma !” exclaimed her

daughter. "Do you remember that the doctor has forbidden you to leave the house till the east winds have gone? Dear mamma, there is nothing to apprehend for me, when Mr. Duncan is with me. And I really think I am the fittest person to undertake the search."

"How do you mean, Mary?"

"Nelly had a sort of attachment for me," said Miss Elliot; "and I might have some influence over her. Either you or I must go, mamma. You are not able; and even if you were, shame might induce her to conceal herself from you."

"Well, my love," said Mrs. Elliot, after a thoughtful pause, "you may be right—you shall try it, at least; though you will see some sad scenes, Mary, that I would willingly spare you."

"I am not afraid, mamma. And may

I write to Mr. Duncan, and ask him to call here, that you may explain?"

Her mother acquiesced; and Mary dispatched a note to the worthy missionary, inviting him to tea the following evening. They were certain he would come; for he had few acquaintances, and he enjoyed visiting them.

Mr. Duncan was one of the most active and devoted of the city missionaries. His early life had been one struggle with adverse circumstances, and his riper years were spent in labouring among scenes of the most revolting and harrowing description. But he had a strong heart, and an apostolic zeal to sustain him. At ten years of age, deserted and friendless, he had often no covering for his head but the sky; and no bed but a hay-rick, or a sheltered corner of a field. At the age of twenty, he could

neither write nor read ; and yet, at forty he was earnestly and efficiently labouring as a missionary in the wynds and streets of the Old Town of Edinburgh.

Worthy and devoted man ! his labours are now over, and he has gone to his reward. But who that had the privilege of his friendship can cease to regret him, not merely for their own sake, but for that of the outcast population who composed his flock ?

Mr. Duncan came to tea, and willingly agreed to be Mary's guide and protector : indeed, he was ready for every good work. It was arranged that she should meet him the following afternoon on the North Bridge ; and that they should then proceed on their search through his district.

At two o'clock, the hour appointed—he did not consider an earlier one advisable—

he was waiting for her on the bridge. Mary, when she joined him, was considerably agitated at the idea of the scenes she was about to witness; but the good missionary attributed it entirely to her anxiety regarding Nelly, and tried to cheer her by expressing hopes of speedily discovering the girl's lurking-place. He was so accustomed to the sight of wretchedness and depravity, that he forgot the effect it was likely to produce on her. They walked on together; Mary summoning all her resolution to her aid, and soon reached the High Street.

"I will make bold to offer you my arm, Miss Elliot, when we come to Blackfriars Wynd, where I mean to commence our search," he said; "for they are an unruly set there, and I have seen the bairns cry out, and even fling stones at

decent strangers ; but there is no fear when I am with you."

Mary thanked him, and was glad to avail herself of his help when they reached the wynd. They entered the archway, and now she saw in daylight—and yet the day was but twilight there—all the horrors and squalor that gloom and exhaustion had concealed from the eyes of poor Nelly Armstrong when conducted thither. Idle, ruffian-like men stood in clusters beneath the archway, and at almost every doorway down the wynd. Some of them were mere lads, yet they had an aspect of low cunning and effrontery, which showed that, though young in years, they were old in vicious experience. Each had a dirty, smoke-blackened pipe in his mouth, and indeed, among other viler smells, the wynd was redolent of tobacco. Women

with wretched, rickety infants in their arms; girls, whose tawdry appearance and bold stare at the shuddering stranger—they all knew Mr. Duncan—too plainly revealed their degraded condition; children unkempt, unwashed, and more than half-naked, thronged the filthy, slippery causeway.

It was evident at a glance, that Blackfriars Wynd contained a dense population of its own. Mean and miserable shops occupied most of the lower stories of the buildings, in the dim recesses of which, gas, even at this time of day, was burning. The houses on either side were lofty, and many of them had the remains of ancient grandeur, though sorely mutilated and fast falling into ruins. The windows were mostly destitute of glass—even the very frames of some were decayed and dropping

into pieces. Out of them, squalid, abandoned-looking women, were lounging and conversing with their opposite neighbours, or with people in the wynd. Ragged clothes were fluttering in every direction and still more obscuring the air, which dried, though it could not purify them.

The appearance of a stranger of Miss Elliot's rank seemed to arouse the curiosity of the inhabitants, and many a conversation was interrupted for the purpose of gazing upon her. As she was with the missionary, they had no doubts concerning her errand. She was a "visitor," that is, a labourer amongst the poor, though such Christian heroines are somewhat rare in the *purlieus* of the wynds.

The atmosphere was heavy, oppressive, and stifling. The very light of day seemed

unable or unwilling to penetrate into these forlorn and dismal abodes. A grim, lowering shadow rested on houses and street. Here were dens—human habitations—whose rotting doors stood wide open from morning till night to admit light into the windowless interiors. There was nothing within them to attract a thief.

“Is it possible that people live in those places, Mr. Duncan?” said Mary, shocked beyond description by the glimpses the feeble glimmer of light which penetrated into those vaults, afforded her of their wretchedness.

“We will visit some of them, and then you will be able to judge for yourself,” said the good man. “I am always glad when I can get a lady like you to accompany me to these places, Miss Elliot. It

is good for all of us to know something of the misery around us."

"How's a' wi' ye the day, Marget?" he said, kindly, to an old woman who feebly approached them, carrying a basket with a scanty stock of pins, tapes, and stay-laces displayed in it for sale.

The old woman's face brightened, as looking hastily up she recognized the missionary.

"How are ye yoursell, Mr. Duncan? Oh! but I'm blithe to see ye; ye havena been up at my bit place the day, hae ye?"

"No, Marget; but some of these days I will. I was glad to see you at the meeting the other night, though it was so wet. We have a prayer-meeting in one of the houses here twice a-week," Miss

Elliot," he added, addressing the young lady.

She asked if it was well attended.

"Sometimes not," he answered; "but I think the people are beginning to come better out. Last night we met, I had a congregation of fifty and upwards—it was very encouraging. Well, Marget, how have you got on to-day?"

"No vera weel, Mr. Duncan," said the old woman, shaking her head. "But I've gotten three bawbees, and that'll get me some tea the night. God bless ye, Mem," she said, curtseying gratefully as Mary put a trifle into her hand; "may ye never ken what it is to want yoursell!"

"That woman now, Miss Elliot," said Mr. Duncan, as they walked on, "is one of the

few decent people here. She gets a sixpence in the week from the parish, and that basket brings her in a very little sometimes. But she's often very ill off, poor body, and I am glad you gave her something."

"God help her!" exclaimed Mary, at that moment thinking painfully of her own superior advantages; "she must be eighty."

"She is upwards of seventy," replied the missionary. "But now, Miss Elliot, follow me up this staircase; this is one of the places we ought to visit."

She followed him up a dark, dilapidated staircase, where the dirt lay at least an inch thick, and where the utmost care was necessary to prevent stumbling. Loathsome sights and smells met her at every turning, and but for her resolution to persevere in her undertaking, notwithstanding all obstacles,

she would have retreated sickened and terrified. When they had attained the second floor, the missionary pushed open a door and entered. Mary, however, paused on the threshold at sight of the inmates of the apartment.

These were four girls, and at this time of day they were partaking of breakfast, of which spirits formed a portion. They at first stared at the intruders as if astonished by their entrance, and then laughed loudly. This brought some other females from an adjacent room, but these, whenever they saw the missionary, hastily retreated and shut their door. None of them was Nelly Armstrong.

The missionary addressed a few words of solemn warning to those before him, to which, however, their side-looks at each

other and low giggles showed they were insensible. He then followed Mary, who had already retreated.

“She is not there then, Miss Elliot,” he said, as he led the way up another flight of the broken stairs.

Mary answered shudderingly in the negative.

“Come in,” said a voice in answer to the missionary’s tap on a door of the next floor. “Oh ! is it you, Mr. Duncan ? come in, Sir ; you are kindly welcome.” And the woman ushered them through the dark doorway into her abode.

It was a very small room, but it contained two beds besides an infant’s cradle, and Mr. Duncan informed Mary that its inmates every night amounted to eleven. Five of them were at present within—a very old woman

being one of them—but the rest, with the exception of the person who opened the door, were children. They looked very poor, but respectable. For this hole the family had to pay a high rent, which at that time they could ill afford, as the father was out of work. Their neighbours too, both above and below, were of the worst description.

“But,” as the poor woman said, “how could they help themselves? working folks couldn’t easily get houses to suit them, and they had just to take what they could get. The thing she most disliked about their present situation was, that her children were making acquaintances in the wynd, which she could not prevent, and were learning bad ways. The air, too, was so foul that none of them were strong. The old mother, besides, was very bad with rheumatism, and



they had little to cover her with, for they had been obliged to part with some of their blankets to the pawn-shop to keep body and soul together lately."

It was a painful account. Mary was glad to pull out her purse again, thankful that it was in her power to relieve immediate necessity. She then retired with tears in her eyes.

"Ay, it is hard for such as them to live in this neighbourhood, Miss Elliot," said the missionary, who observed the impression made upon her feelings: "but the worst of it is, that their bairns will never be so decent as themselves; they will sink lower. The sights here, besides the filth and the foul air, have a vitiating effect upon the mind. The woman knows this, and I have witnessed it again and again myself."

“Can they not get houses elsewhere?” asked Mary.

“None that they could afford to pay for. The working classes have little choice in Edinburgh; and the consequences of living in such a locality are dreadful. That family now is still struggling on in a poor but a respectable way. They have not been above half a year here. But they will probably end as others have done before them. They will lose heart at length—for the bad air here has a most depressing effect upon the spirits—and then either father or mother, perhaps both, will take to drinking, after which the course down the hill is fearfully rapid. I know it by experience. Oh! Miss Elliot, I often feel my courage fail when I witness these things; but it is God’s work, and I dare not desert it.”

"It is trying indeed to witness evils one cannot remedy," replied Mary, sympathisingly.

Her companion was silent for some minutes; he was evidently struggling with painful thoughts. But he soon roused himself, and recurred to the object which had brought them to the wynd.

Staircase after staircase, each more broken, dirty, and dangerous than its neighbours, did they climb. Room after room did they enter on their quest, but all without success. In general they were freely admitted into houses, but sometimes a door would be hastily barred in their faces. A few respectable individuals were found scattered here and there, and they seemed among the dens of infamy by which they were surrounded as strangely out of place. These all received

Mr. Duncan and his companion courteously, and when questioned as to having remarked any person of Nelly's appearance in the wynd, could not remember her by Miss Elliot's description. "Besides, they kept themselves to themselves," they said, "as they needed to do in such a neighbourhood, and took little note of the ongoings in the wynd."

Mary began to grow desponding; she had been very hopeful on commencing the quest. But she now saw how easy it was for Nelly to be in that place and yet concealed from them.

It would be unseemly as well as painful in such a work as this, where the object is not to depict vice except when it is unavoidably connected with the history of Nelly Armstrong, to describe all the scenes

that were made visible to Mary Elliot's shrinking eye in her progress with Mr. Duncan through the wynd.

The lower they descended, the more squalid, miserable, and gloomy were the houses, and the inhabitants degenerated in the same scale. Most of them were either thieves or beggars, and few of them were at home at this hour. In one room they found two women and a girl: the former being employed in sewing coarse sacks. They were the only ones of their class at work. This room showed the melancholy remains of former magnificence, but it did not contain a single article of furniture, not even a few wood shavings or a little straw for a bed. The window-glass was entirely absent, and the cold wind blew through the gaping aperture upon the shivering and scantily-clothed

creatures who were crouching on the floor. There they also lay at night, Mr. Duncan informed Mary, with only their rags to cover them.

They found large families in dark cellars, cowering in the gloom over grates filled with glowing cinders, gathered from the dust-heaps on the streets. Nelly was not likely to be discovered in such dreary dens; but Mr. Duncan, in his earnestness to enlist his young friend's sympathies in behalf of the poor amongst whom he laboured, could not resist leading her into some of them. And they surpassed all that she had ever imagined of wretchedness. But she shrank less from the contemplation of this, than she did from the sight of her own degraded infamous sex in some of the dwellings she had visited.

Three hours were spent in exploring the

Blackfriars and Toddrick Wynds: the latter, in regard to cleanliness, space, and air, being even worse than its neighbour. Mary was sick—sick almost to fainting, with the scenes of squalor, vice, and destitution to which she was introduced.

“And these,” she thought, “are in Edinburgh, at our own doors; and yet we can lie down night after night in peace and security without seriously troubling ourselves about them.”

“This is dreadful, Mr. Duncan!” she repeatedly exclaimed.

“There’s a volcano secretly working here, Miss Elliot,” he replied, solemnly, “that one day may discharge itself with a violence most of us little dream of. Vice seems to spring up like weeds, naturally, in these wynds. One cannot touch pitch and not be defiled;

and no one can live here long and not be injured by it. And there's a spirit of discontent and insubordination—and who can wonder at it?—among even the more decent people here, that makes me dread any popular eruption in the country. It would be like a spark of fire among gunpowder."

Mary shuddered.

"Ay, a mob of such desperadoes as we see around us here is a fearful thing! That man now we last visited," continued Mr. Duncan, "is a good specimen of the spirit I mean. You heard what he said about the condition of the working classes, and how bitterly he complained of injustice and oppression. He is always brooding over this, for whenever I look in on him, he introduces the subject—will I, nill I. Now, when I first commenced my labours

here, that man was a quiet, inoffensive, respectable character ; but want, and drink, and the difficulty he often has in procuring work, and, above all, the bad neighbourhood, have gradually made him reckless. Such an individual would be very dangerous in revolutionary times, for he has a kind of rude gift of eloquence, and some influence in consequence over those around him.

“And,” pursued Mr. Duncan, in his earnestness not observing that his companion was about to speak, “it is a dreadful thing to see young lads, who at one time promised to be steady and honest, by yielding to some of the numerous temptations that lie in wait for them here at every corner, end their days as pickpockets and vagabonds. These public-houses that

you see so plentiful here, are one great means of depraving them. That abominable whiskey is the curse of poor old Scotland. They are sent to jail for some trifling offence at first, and they leave it worse than they entered it, by associating with the experienced hands there. Oh! Miss Elliot, all this weighs heavily on my heart. I feel as if any exertion of mine to stem this mighty flood of iniquity that threatens eventually, I fear, to desolate the land, were utterly hopeless; and yet I have been cheered occasionally too. Some poor wretch, that would not open his door to me in health, has been glad to send for the missionary when laid on a sick bed. And there are good bodies scattered here and there, with whom it is always a refreshment to my spirit to meet. Ah! Miss Elliot,

how the traveller must prize a well of water in the desolate, thirsty wilderness !”

He sighed heavily—Mary sighed too : he had painted a picture that oppressed and terrified her mind.

“ But you, who see all this, Mr. Duncan,” she inquired, after a pause, “ can you suggest no remedy ?”

He shook his head.

“ It is easier to discover a disease than to know how to cure it, Miss Elliot,” he replied. “ My duties as a town missionary necessarily lead me into closer connection with the worst classes of the population than most men ; but though I see all I have described to you, I know not how the evil may be arrested ; I leave that to wiser heads than mine. And yet there is one thing I

have great hopes from—and that is our ragged schools.”

Mary listened eagerly.

“There is little or no hope of improving the adult population, Miss Elliot. It is almost impossible to make an impression upon them; their habits are formed. Of course, there is nothing too hard for God to perform—His grace can burst even their bands; but, humanly speaking, it looks hopeless. But the bairns—let us get at the bairns, by all means.”

“There are many children in the schools, Mr. Duncan,” said Miss Elliot.

“Ay, my dear young lady; but there are hundreds still running wild among these wynds, and growing up to be thieves and prostitutes. Oh! if every one, like you and

your mother, would aid and encourage these schools, it would be a great national benefit."

They were now returning towards the High Street, having penetrated to the junction with the Cowgate. Blackfriars Wynd was more crowded than at first. Knots of dissolute-looking people were assembled at every door. It had been rumoured through the wynd that the missionary and the young lady were in search of some one, and every eye was busy scanning the latter as they reappeared. Mr. Duncan spoke to some of them in passing, and he was generally answered courteously. When he remonstrated with them for non-attendance at the meetings, the ingenuity they displayed in making excuses was extraordinary, and loud and glib

were the promises they made of punctuality for the future.

"I wish we had got admittance into old Leezie Brown's house," said the missionary, glancing up at certain windows as they proceeded: "she is a hardened old sinner, and keeps several disreputable lodgers. If the girl is here, she is as likely to be with her as anybody."

"Shall we not try for admittance again, Mr. Duncan?" said Mary, anxiously.

"It would be of no use," he answered, "they always bar the door in my face there."

Mary reluctantly walked on.

"And do you think you will persevere in this search, Miss Elliot?" said the mis-

sionary, as once more they stood in the High Street.

“I cannot rest till I have done all I can, Mr. Duncan. I cannot think the girl is altogether depraved; and the idea of what she may be reduced to, friendless, in this horrible place, is dreadful to me. Her poor mother’s heart is breaking, too—if it is not already broken. I *must* go on.”

“Far be it from me to gainsay you,” said the missionary. “Indeed, Miss Elliot, I am too glad when I can get any one to accompany me where we have been to-day. I cannot attend you to-morrow; but next day I will be waiting for you, if agreeable.”

Mary thanked him.

“It will take you some days to go

through with it, Miss Elliot; there are all the High Street closes, and the Cowgate and Leith Wynd, besides the Canon-gate. There is, luckily, little fever in the town at present; for I promised to Mrs. Elliot not to expose you to infection."

He accompanied her to the North Bridge, where he took leave of her, after presenting her with a copy of some verses relating to the scenes they had that day witnessed, which he had been empowered to distribute among his friends.

Mary went sorrowfully home—body and mind were alike wearied. She could scarcely bear to think of what she had heard and seen. An awful impression had been made upon her. Her mother read

her want of success in her pale, dejected countenance.

“You have not succeeded, Mary?”

“No, mamma,” she replied; and sitting down, she burst into tears.

“You have seen much to distress you, my love,” said Mrs. Elliot, tenderly.

“Oh! much, much!”

“You will not then persevere in this search, Mary?”

“Yes, mamma, I mean it,” replied her daughter, hastily wiping away her tears.

“I have had another letter from Miss Archer since you went out,” said her mother, after a pause. “The poor mother is still in the same deplorable state of mind, and her eyesight, it is feared, is now irretrievably gone.”

“ Oh ! mamma—mamma ! ” Mary’s tears were flowing afresh.

“ Go on with your undertaking, love, if you wish it ; I wish I could aid you. And may God bless it, for the recovery of this poor erring girl ! ”

After tea, when Mary was rested and refreshed, she remembered the poem Mr. Duncan had given her, and read it to her mother.

A CRY FROM THE WYND.

Up, Brothers, up ! the sun is high,
Waste not then in sloth the day ;
Fight the battle of the Lord
Through the city’s crowded way !
Guilt and Ignorance you’ll find,
Brothers, in the city Wynd.

Down yon dark and noisome alley,
Girt and weaponed, let us toil,
Where no sunbeams gild the windows
Of each high and crumbling pile !
Countless human souls we'll find,
Brothers, in that city Wynd.

Yet between those ragged clothes'-lines,
Fluttering in the smoky air,
Heaven's pure azure calmly looketh
Down into the darkness there :
Light for every darkened mind,
Brothers, in the city Wynd !

To the foul and gaping tavern,
With its hellish snares and din ;
To the pawn-shop's deadly refuge,
Onward, Brothers ! enter in !
With a bold and steadfast mind,
Struggle through the city Wynd !

To yon cellars dank and noxious,
Where poor wretches skulk from sight,
Where the sun's rays never enter,
Bear the rays of Gospel light !
Speak in accents soft and kind,
Brothers, in the city Wynd !

Through the low-brow'd, putrid entries
Rank with pestilential air ;
Up each dark and creaking staircase,
Seek the beggar's loathsome lair !
A Lazarus you may leave behind,
Brothers, in the city Wynd !

Tell the weak and starving mother,
With her ragged infant crew,
That the Saviour whom she knows not,
Died to save the wretched, too !
Broken hearts you'll sometimes find,
Brothers, in the city Wynd !

Tell yon poor and guilty outcast,
Wanderer on the midnight street,
Such a woman, vile and fallen,
Washed with tears her Saviour's feet !
Mary Magdalenes you'll find,
Brothers, in the city Wynd.

Glide amidst the little children,
Vagrants never used to rule ;
Guilt and want their sole companions,
And the streets their only school :
Gather all the lambs you find,
Brothers, in the city Wynd !

Let not weariness o'ertake you,
Nor discouragement affright !
Ye are soldiers of Jehovah,
He will lead you in the fight !
Jesus you may always find,
Brothers, in the city Wynd.

Onward, Brothers, to the rescue !

Waste not then in sloth the day ;

Fight the battle of the Lord

Through the city's crowded way !

Leave not even a hoof behind,

Brothers, in the city Wynd !

CHAPTER V.

DESTITUTION, crime, squalor, in terrible sameness. Down dim, narrow closes, heavy with putridity ; up rickety, trembling staircases, wherever the missionary leads ; beggars, drunkards, thieves, harlots everywhere. Some instances of decent respectable poverty, as formerly, but lost in the great mass of wretchedness and vice—little lights, however, shining in dark places. Great, lowering, gloomy piles of buildings ; long, steep,

misty alleys, where only a grey, uncertain twilight, that sickens the eye, can penetrate ; small, dull, miserable courts, hiding themselves from sight in out-of-the-way places, and known to few but their own inhabitants and the police ; strange mutilated carvings over doorways and windows ; tottering chimneys, tumbling roofs, cellars like pitfalls ; ragged clothes drooping heavily from windows high up in the air ; impurities everywhere, stench insufferable ; pawn-shops, dram-shops, low eating-houses ; sheltered archways and passages, now comparatively deserted, but nightly tenanted by the houseless. The blue heavens over all—God above ; hell beneath.

Comparative cleanliness in other places ; —less dilapidation, less actual destitution, but a superfluity of vice ; reckless, lounging,

villainous men at every corner ; tawdry, painted women, leaning over windows, or hurrying to the dram-shops for the usual allowance ; wandering musicians—for these quarters pay well—scraping away for the amusement of their licentious listeners. Heart-sickening sensations ! a new dreadful knowledge, that can *never*, never, she feels, be forgotten ! A conviction of neglected time, of indifference to God's work ; a dread of approaching judgment, such as overtook Sodom for her iniquities ; a wondering, awful sense of God's manifold mercy and patience to a guilty world ! Deep humility, ardent gratitude, yearning pity !

Such are Mary Elliot's sensations, as, clinging to her protector's arm, she hurries through the scenes we have described. They seldom see such a visitor, and no wonder their

inhabitants gaze and marvel! Mary's object is not attained, but she has learnt a solemn lesson, and one that will influence her future life.

No—there is no trace of Nelly. Among those hundreds of poor, depraved, abandoned women, that Mary has looked on during these three dreadful days, she is not to be found. Mary has eagerly scanned every countenance in the rooms she has entered; in the open wynds and vennels she has been equally vigilant. She has gone quietly and steadily on, forcing herself to face scenes whose hideousness, a week ago, she could not have conceived, for the purpose of rescuing an unhappy girl from destruction; and she has not succeeded. But the motives which prompted her at first to undertake the revolting task

still exercise their influence over her; they are even strengthened by what she has witnessed. She returns home, despairing in this manner of discovering her she seeks, but feeling unable to rest till she has accomplished it.

Mother and daughter's hearts are heavy; but there comes something in a day or two that revives them—a letter from George. He is to be home in October; and Mary's pale cheek and languid eye flush and sparkle, and she forgets the lost girl and the suffering mother, though only for a short time. Ah! if he is to have his will—and it is probable—there will be a larger family circle round the Craiglee fireplaces this Christmas than were the two preceding ones.

George has been detained abroad much

longer than his friends anticipated, but he is now certain of getting away. Mary loses herself for a time in pleasant dreams about the future; but the atmosphere of the wynds is still hanging about her; and her visions are perhaps less brightly coloured than they were wont to be when George Elliot and Craiglee were in question. There is a weight upon her spirits even now, when the vistas of her home woods are in imagination opening before her, with their rich sunshine and deep shadows interlaced. She sighs, while she wishes she were there at present, with the fresh mountain breeze fanning her feverish cheek—feverish from inhaling foul air, and from the impression made by the fouler sights she lately witnessed.

George writes well; his letters are al-

ways graphic and *piquant*. It is quite a refreshment to Mary this week reading this one over and over again. It is medicine to her, and she needs it. Her mother and Martha are glad to see her looking like her former self again. Martha had had strong objections to Miss Elliot's late undertaking, and her young lady's languid looks since that time have confirmed them. It is a blessed letter.

But poor Mrs. Armstrong in the country—alas! nothing happens to soothe her sorrows. Alone she seldom is, for Miss Archer kindly provides against it; but what human kindness can heal a broken heart?—and hers is fast breaking.

There she sits, pale and shadowy, by the side of her once-cheerful hearth. Thomas's chair stands empty opposite, but

she does not see it. The evening sun streams in at the window, and falls on her black dress and widow's cap; but her eyes are for ever closed to its beams. Her eyesight, it is thought, might have been longer preserved, but that she has wept it away during the last two months. She sits patiently in that spot from morning till night, silent unless some visitor enters, and listening, they all think, to every foot-step that approaches, in the hope that it may be that of her lost daughter.

Her sorrows have obtained for her a kind of respectful consideration from her rough neighbours of the Row. She is not intruded upon, though they do her many a kindness in their own way. As they softly pass her window, they always stop and look in with awe on the motionless figure seated

in the arm-chair by the fireside, and many a "Hech, Sirs!" and "Puir body!" is ejaculated as they observe it. They are very severe in their condemnation of Nelly. No one seems to pity her, unless it may be Miss Archer secretly. Poor Nelly's old offences are not yet forgotten in the Row. Her pride, coquetry, and airs of superiority have gained her many enemies in her native place. Perhaps some of them rejoiced in her fall.

Her young brother looks dull and unhappy — no wonder, his home is so changed. He still works at the colliery, but if consideration for his mother did not restrain him, he would ere this have turned his back on the village. The boy frets at the disgrace that has befallen his family. He was fond of his sister, and

pires after her, though he cannot forget that she is the cause of all this wretchedness. He does not like to mix with the neighbours, and he sits moodily at home when work is over. He hears a great deal about emigration at times, and thinks seriously about it. He will emigrate if his mother dies.

Mrs. Armstrong is allowed a free house and fuel by the coal-master. But for the Archers, however, she would be badly off in her helpless state. They principally support her. One of the young girls of the Row cleans her house and attends to her wants—but these are very few; she gives her attendant little trouble, who plays half the day on the road in front of the houses.

Miss Archer is never wearied of sitting

with the poor blind woman, reading the Scriptures to her, and endeavouring to comfort her. She is always speaking of hope to her; but if Mrs. Armstrong could see the expression of the kind speaker's countenance at these times, she would know that her looks in general contradict her words. Miss Archer is beginning to have a terrible idea of the snares of cities: it oppresses and frightens her. She and the clergyman are the only visitors the unhappy mother cares to see—her sorrows are too sacred for common sympathy. She has forgiven Nelly; and the mother's heart yearns—yearns after her erring child. Will she ever return to her? Will she ever think of her poor lonely mother, and come back, as the prodigal did to his father? But can she return? Is she still

in the land of the living? are the fearful questions that press on Mrs. Armstrong's mind. Every time that Miss Archer enters the room she fears she is the bearer of some dreadful intelligence, and her darkened eyeballs strain, but in vain, to read it in her visitor's face.

The days drag on wearily, heavily to her. There is a hideous sameness in them. In the morning she is inclined to cry out from her burdened heart, "would it were evening," and in the evening, "would it were morning." She seems uneasy when her son is long absent, and even when he is present she is not satisfied without often extending her hand to touch him, while the words, "Poor Jamie—poor Jamie!" escape from her lips as she mournfully shakes her head.

There—she has caught the sound of Miss Archer's footstep as it crosses the threshold. Her little handmaid is out of doors, playing, probably, at "pal-lal" on the opposite footpath with some companions, and she has been sitting alone for more than an hour.

The woman who paused at the commencement of that time and looked stealthily in, might, if she returned, see her still in the same motionless, patient attitude as before—she has not stirred since then. There has been no sound in the cottage during the interval, save the ticking of the clock, the fall of a cinder upon the hearth, and the subdued murmur of the children's voices from the adjacent village. One might have fancied her asleep; but no—the sense of hearing has, as usual,

been morbidly awake. She listens all day—sometimes through great part of the night; for the sighing of the wind at her window will break her slumbers, and the distant footstep of a benighted traveller will raise her up in a sitting posture in her bed in trembling expectation. Her thoughts are occupied with her daughter, even in sleep; for her name is often upon her lips. And during those long night-watches, when slumber does not visit her, with what prayers and cries does she appeal to Heaven for the wanderer!

Miss Archer comes softly in, but the lonely woman instantly recognizes the familiar tread. The head is turned eagerly in the direction of the door; there is a faint flush now on the pale, thin face, and a look of anxiety and expectation,

that is painful to witness. The hands are trembling visibly. She cannot speak ; but there is no need — her visitor fully understands these signs.

“How do you feel to-day, Mrs. Armstrong?” says her kind friend.

“Have—have you heard anything, Miss Archer?” the mother at last faintly articulates.

“Nothing certain,” Miss Archer is obliged to say ; “but I have great hopes of hearing something soon—our friends are very active.”

“God’s will be done !”

And the face fades again into its ordinary paleness—there is a nervous twitching for a few moments about the mouth—the quiet, heartbroken expression returns

—a deep shuddering sigh, and the mother leans back in her chair as before.

Yes, the Elliots were still active—they had not in despair relinquished their efforts to discover Nelly. Hospital, asylum, shelter, were all visited, but visited in vain: no tidings of her could be obtained there. Mary's mind had been busy with a new plan, and now she communicated it to Mr. Duncan. It was a singular one. With all Mary Elliot's gentleness, there was a decision and energy about her character that often took her friends by surprise. Her present proposal almost frightened her mother.

“Mamma,” said Mary, about a week after her visits to the wynds, “Mr. Duncan and I have been consulting together, and

we think our new plan is likely to be a successful one; all we want now is your consent to it."

Her mother fixed her eyes earnestly on her.

"It is nothing very alarming, mamma. You know I am never harmed by late walks. Mr. Duncan and I will walk along the principal streets for a few evenings, and we have great hopes in this way of meeting with Nelly."

"Mary!"

"We will be very prudent, mamma, and walk very quietly. Oh, mamma! think—think how great is the object!"

"Mary, I confess you frighten me. What do you intend doing if you meet with her? If what Martha heard is

true, she will probably have companions."

"Perhaps not; but we will be able to track her at all events, and afterwards we could give directions to the police, one of whom could accompany us in daylight. If she is alone, I will speak to her. And may I bring her here, if she is willing to accompany me?"

"You must give me time to think of it, Mary."

"I know what time will do, dear mamma," said her daughter, caressing her; "it will just tell you that this is God's work, and ought to be done."

"But, Mary, what would your future husband think of this?" asked Mrs. Elliot uneasily.

“ I am not married yet, mamma,” replied Mary, with some archness ; then she added seriously : “ I am certain George would not disapprove, if all the circumstances were stated to him.”

“ But can I trust you not to expose yourself unnecessarily to insult, Mary ? Have you such command over your feelings as to perform what you propose, and yet not draw observation upon yourself ?”

Mrs. Elliot shook her head distrustfully.

“ I think I have, mamma — indeed, I am sure of it. And do not forget that Mr. Duncan is to be my companion.”

Her mother was silent and disturbed.

“ Mamma,” at length said Mary, softly, “ remember Miss Archer’s last letter. Think

of that unhappy mother in the country, and suppose yourself in her place !”

Mary eventually succeeded in obtaining her mother’s consent, but not without certain conditions.

CHAPTER VI.

It is late in the afternoon in Blackfriars Wynd. All is in full activity there, though its busiest season is towards midnight. Then most of its inhabitants are astir—like nature's savage creatures, they prowl in the dark, and retire to their dens during the day to sleep. From the adjacent High Street and Cowgate, rise the usual din and stir of busy life; carters bawling "coal," haw-

kers and fishwomen's cries mingled together, and the rattling and rumbling of vehicles of all sorts in bewildering confusion.

It is a day in the latter end of sunny June. The sun verging towards the west streams lovingly over the picturesque old city. The trees that fringe the ravine which separates the Old Town from the New, and adorn the grey castle rock, are all gay in their first unsullied greenness. Light and shadow are holding fantastic revels among the corners and archways, and even up among the steep roofs and chimneys of those lofty, gaunt buildings, whose numerous narrow windows look down on the busy bed of what was once in the olden time a still and sequestered loch. One side of the

streets is sunny yet; but the shadows are fast lengthening. In the wynds it is twilight already. Those heavy, mouldering archways are always gloomy. Even in their youngest and palmiest days, their recesses never saw the blithesome sun; and they have a damp, frowzy atmosphere peculiar to vaults, while those that traverse them might pass for the ghouls or spectres which haunt them.

And yet, through these grim entries, have tripped beauty and high rank when royalty abode in old Holyrood. Down those dark, dreary staircases, stately visions have glided, and knightly spurs have clanked on the steps worn now by beggars and the vile of the earth; and proudly caparisoned steeds, and men-at-arms clad in buff and mail have

swept like a hail-storm through these wynds, and many a lordly battle-cry has echoed among them.

Alas ! the old pageantry has vanished long ago. Knight and ladye and squire—the masque, the courtly revel, the song and dance, where are they now ? Echo answers—“ Where ? ” The ladye’s bower, the baron’s hall ; nay, the proud archiepiscopal palace, where princely prelates held high state, and rivalled even royalty itself—to what are they reduced ?

Lo ! yonder come some of their inhabitants. Young girls, gaudily attired, are tripping up the wynd. Hark to their singing—it is a wild and licentious ditty suited for a bacchanal—to their loud and shrieking laughter ! Does not your blood

run cold as you listen? Look at their free, fantastic gestures—the flashing of their bold and impudent eyes! Oh! womanhood—womanhood, how art thou fallen! They vanish through the archway to the further streets, and mingling in the crowd, they bear pollution to the stream of life as it flows along.

And here come others—the thief, the drunkard, the publican—poverty clad in loathsome rags—hunger, pale, emaciated, and hopeless, watching with famished eyes for the crumbs which fall from rich men's tables—oh! how scantily! Children young in years, old in misery; the lame, the halt, the blind, the withered in soul as in body.

Oh! for an angel to move the waters! for that God-like voice of authority to ex-

claim as of old: "Rise, and walk!" for such an outpouring of His Spirit as would rouse hundreds and thousands of His careless, professing followers, to go forth as apostles and teachers into those regions of darkness and heathendom! "Then would the wilderness become as a fruitful field; and the fruitful field be counted as a forest."

Old Leezie Brown is at home—rather an unusual thing at this time of day; but household affairs require it. Matters are a little out of joint in her family, and she stays at home to set them right.

Like an old rat she looks, crouching by her fireside, smoking that short black pipe. How keen are her eyes—how cunning and calculating is the expression

of her shrivelled countenance! She is evidently pondering on things of deep import to her own interests; but that they are puzzling and troublesome any one may read at a glance. Something is beyond her depth—not in the usual course of her experience; and it frets her—good old soul—not to be able to manage it.

There are the battered old bonnet and cloak on the nail behind the door. Many a storm of wind and rain they must have encountered to give them that brown and venerable aspect—but no one, I dare say, ever saw them in their fresh days. Leezie's habiliments have always had a rusty, ancient look in the memory of her oldest customer. What tales might not those garments unfold if they could speak! They

are having that rare thing, a holiday, this afternoon.

And yonder, in the dark corner, is the basket—empty, for a wonder. It seemed tolerably heavy yesternight, however, when Leezie came pattering down the wynd. It, too, is not required to-day, much to Leezie's annoyance, who hates idleness because it brings in no money. Money is the idol of Leezie's worship. It is her religion; as it may be yours also, my friend, though you attend church, and consider yourself, and perhaps are considered by others, as a devout and consistent "professor." Beware, Demas!

Leezie's windows, for various reasons, are not particularly calculated to admit sunshine. They are deep and small, coated with dirt, and moreover their outlook is to the wynd.

Upon the whole, Leezie's apartments—for she has a small room opening on the other—are rather of a gloomy description. Some soap and water, and a little paint might increase their cheerfulness without doubt; but, as I have already insinuated, cleanliness is at a discount in the wynds—indeed it may be denominated decidedly unfashionable there.

There is also, as I formerly mentioned, a scanty supply of furniture—another peculiarity of the district—and what there is, is in an extremely weak and invalidated condition. Leezie's family or their guests are evidently somewhat rough and boisterous in their habits. But though far from being a prepossessing residence, Leezie's apartments are not sordidly miserable, like some of the adjacent dwellings. Those blankets,

doubtless, would be greatly improved by being immersed in the wash-tub, and in winter must be rather scanty; and a few more chairs, or even stools, might be desirable for comfort. But notwithstanding all this, it is a good habitation for Blackfriars Wynd.

Leezie's family—for she is the happy mother of five adopted daughters, over whom she watches with true maternal vigilance—are likewise all at home. Their hour of absenting themselves is not yet arrived, though it is drawing near. They are squatted round the hearth—for they have a tendency to draw near the fireplace even in summer. From the appearance of the table, it is evident they have not long finished breakfast, although it is so late in the day. Sad, sad it is to look upon them,

and to read in their hardened or hardening countenances the lives they lead. Some of them are very young. Two of them, however, have the bloated dull aspect of habitual drunkards, and yonder bottle, standing half empty on the table, proclaims a fearful fact. Alas! alas! it is often required here to drown reflection and even despair.

Ay, it is not every Magdalene who has voluntarily entered on her soul-killing, body-destroying trade. Man! what has become of that once innocent girl who fell beneath your arts and temptations? You have lost sight of her—years have passed on. She may be forgotten, or she may be so changed that you do not know her, though she passes you nightly on the streets. See her here! Look at that brazened brow—those flashing but hollow eyes—that cheek,

pale and haggard, but for the paint which lies upon it! Listen to her words—her imprecations! Do not they make you shudder? Man! that is your work! You began it, and it has gone merrily on since then. What else was to be expected? She has gone *down—down—down*—unable to retrieve herself, and at last indifferent to it. And now, perhaps, you are the sober, circumspect head of a family; the father of daughters whom you would consider polluted by merely touching the clothes of that poor outcast. You are a member of a church, and you hold your head erect among honourable and Christian men. I tell you, for all this, God will yet bring you to judgment!

Look at her companion! Stand forth thou with the bloated countenance and dull,

heavy eyes of habitual intoxication, and tell us thy history ! Listen to it, and marvel, and shudder !

She tells you she once belonged to the higher ranks of society—that she was an only daughter, petted, caressed, and highly accomplished. Alas ! her education was not directed to brace her mind, or to strengthen her impulsive temperament to resist temptation ! It only fitted her to adorn society. When she wanders along the cold streets at night, half-naked and shivering in the blast, she often passes in front of mansions where once she tripped ^{gayest} of the gay, and fairest—ay, you can scarce believe it—fairest among the fair.

Alas ! in an evil hour she met the seducer. Her beauty, her gaiety, her evident giddiness attracted him. Innocent, though volatile,

she believed his protestations honourable—and when she fled in his company from her father's roof, it was with the certain expectation of soon returning thither a happy and triumphant bride.

Alas! alas! she never returned, for she never became a wife.

And he who thus deceived her—for whom she had relinquished parents and home, name and fame—what was his treatment of his victim?

Wearied and sated, and yet unable to rid himself of her, with hellish artifice he endeavoured to sink her still lower—to corrupt every lingering touch of virtue, and so effectually to degrade her mind, as to furnish himself with a plausible excuse for deserting her.

Lower and lower truly she sank, till she

ended with being the mere filth—the foul garbage, the loathsome off-scourings of the streets. But before this she had wandered—hopelessly—back to her native town, to find parents dead of broken hearts, and not a door—of all those which had once swung wide at her approach—to open to let her in.

Look at this other—she was once a servant girl in decent and respectable families. Under the influence of strong temptation she disobeyed her mistress by remaining a whole evening from home. When with repentant heart and trembling steps she returned—it was a first offence—she was ordered from the door, and refused a “character.”

Weeping and despairing, she set off to go to her poor parents’ home in the

country ; but she had not left the suburbs, when she encountered a rich and practised seducer, who, attracted by her appearance, accosted her, and easily drew from her her simple tale of distress.

It is the old story. Ashamed to carry the news of her dismissal to her home, and dazzled by his promises, she was at length induced to return with him to town. She lived a life of gaiety and profusion for a time, but it did not last. She was deserted for another victim — sunk gradually lower and lower—and now behold her in Blackfriars Wynd.

And this, Madam, is your work—yet you are a woman highly esteemed in society — mothers quote you to their daughters as a model of propriety, of severe irreproachable virtue, nay, of

active benevolence. Year after year, with comfortable self-approval, you behold your name enrolled among other subscribers to Magdalene asylums and shelters for the outcast and profligate. Woman ! little do you dream of having been instrumental in fashioning an inmate for them.

You did not anticipate the consequences, I grant you, when you turned your servant from your door without doing her the justice of listening to her trembling explanation ; but it is as truly yours as if you had planned it. Listen to what the Great Master says !

“ For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you ; but if ye forgive not men their tres-

passes, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Oh! if God had been as inexorable to us as we are often towards our fellow-creatures, what would have become of a guilty, disobedient world?

" How would you be,
If He, which is the top of judgment, should
But judge you as you are ?"

Alas! alas! these are no fancy pictures we have pourtrayed — from such a subject the imagination shrinks with loathing — they are facts, and such facts as are of common occurrence.

We do believe that if mistresses were more aware of the dreadful consequences that often flow from rigorous severity

towards their domestic servants, such things would seldomer happen. To discharge a servant suddenly from her situation, unless for some very aggravated offence, is wantonly to expose her in most cases to great danger. It is calculated to make her reckless and desperate, especially when in addition her mistress refuses, as is sometimes the case, to give her a testimonial of character. When this occurs it is almost impossible for her to procure a re-engagement. And who can feel surprised that at last she enters upon a course from which, alas! few return to respectability? Nay, necessity, the want of bread, may force her to it.

Oh! we have a great responsibility laid upon us! A few reproving words, a little timely admonition, might perhaps in many

cases prevent a repetition of faults, and might be the means of saving poor girls from lives of debauchery and deaths of horror.

We complain of the carelessness, ingratitude, and low morality of our domestics; but may we not ourselves be to blame for this? Do we fully recognise the nature of the connection which exists between us and them?—and are we discharging faithfully our obligations? Do we bestow upon them that which is “just and equal,” not only food for their bodies but leisure for improving their more precious souls?—or are we regarding them merely as beasts of burden? Is there anything at least of that kindly sympathy and interest which marked the connection in what, in this instance, we may well call “the good old

times," to be met with at the present day?

Servants then were not mere hirelings, changing their homes as often as the forest does its leaves. They were members—humble ones no doubt, but still members—of the family they served. They shared alike in its joys and afflictions; they grew old in its service, and it was often a master's hand that laid them in the grave. Who does not remember with feelings of almost affectionate regret, the old and faithful servant who perhaps tended his infancy and was the unwearied nurse, friend and helper of every individual in the household? Her master's interests were as precious to her as her own, her mind was ever active to advance them by her own thrift and management, and she was as

much a fixture in the house as the family pictures or the old bureau.

If we wish our servants to respect and consider us, let us begin with respecting and considering them, as the surest means of attaining our object—not forgetting that we also have a Master in heaven to whom we must ere long render our account.

But we must now return to our friend Leezie, who, occasionally withdrawing the pipe from her mouth, addresses herself to one of the members of her family in a strain of practical wisdom, which, however, seems unaccountably to fail in its object. This it is that disconcerts and baffles Leezie, whose countenance, however, strives to look conciliatory and encouraging, as she generally finds it her interest to render it.

“What’s the use o’ taking on sae, dearie?” she said, at length; “it’ll no make the bairn better.”

The words were addressed to a girl seated in a corner of the room, at some distance from the group around the fire. She had probably selected that spot to be as far removed from them as possible. An infant lay on her lap, whose appearance too plainly showed death could not be far distant. The girl did not seem to hear the old woman. Her eyes were fixed with a dry, stony stare on the child, and every convulsion that agitated its feeble, emaciated frame was responded to by a shuddering spasm through hers. There was compassion visible on more than one face present; the other women looked stolidly and indifferently on, as if their feelings could not be roused by

even the presence of Death himself, and one of them even hummed a tune.

The old woman, on receiving no answer, gave a dissatisfied grunt, and again placing the pipe in her mouth, she solaced herself with a few whiffs as she watched the girl and child. At length she took it out, and laid it carefully, to be ready for use, by the side of the rusty grate.

“Ye’ll make yourself ill, Nelly, that’ll be seen,” she said, this time grumblingly, “and I’ll hae the trouble of nursing ye.”

“Whisht !” said the girl suddenly, holding up her hand in an eager attitude of entreaty, but her eyes still burningly rivetted on the babe. It was the first time she had spoken since morning. It consequently startled the old woman, and she was silenced.

A faint sigh — a slight convulsive

plunge of the little limbs—and the baby lay dead on its mother's knee. She knew the change was approaching while she spoke, but now that it had come, she continued to gaze down on the lifeless body, as if unconvinced that all was over. Her own face was nearly as white as that of the waxen image on her knee, and there was a strange, unearthly lustre in her eyes, that contrasted startlingly with it, and looked almost like insanity. She was young, tawdrily dressed like the others, but yet more carelessly than they who were prepared to start on their unhallowed prowls, and were only waiting till the evening was somewhat advanced. That she could not accompany them was evident, and perhaps this was one reason of old Mother Brown's discomfiture, who hated any interruption to business.

One of the girls at last stepped forward, and gently lifting the child from the mother's knee, placed it upon a bed, and spread a handkerchief decently over it. It was done with feeling. The mother gave a wild start as she felt the movement, but she did not resist it. Her head sank upon the vacant lap, and there it lay motionless on her folded arms. There was no sound—no wailing. None could mistake the still, touching attitude of despair. His hand was evidently pressing with an iron grasp on the poor girl's heart.

Her companions looked at each other. Sobs agitated more than one bosom, for the Magdalene, lost, depraved, and sunk as she is, will often pity—nay, aid to the best of her poor ability, her suffering and despairing sister. Tales could be told of sacrifices made by such poor wretches for others whom they

knew to be more wretched than themselves, that might well make the charitable (so-called) blush for their want of self-denial and generosity.

The old woman's mode of comforting had so entirely failed before, that she did not now attempt to resume it. Perhaps she thought it best to allow Time to manage it in his own gradual way. She glanced occasionally at the girl, therefore, but prudently let her alone. If she had spoken to her, it would have probably been as formerly to an unconscious ear; for Nelly did not seem to hear the remarks she made to the other girls. To be sure, they were uttered in a subdued tone, not meant to reach her ear.

"One of ye maun gang to the pa-

rish," muttered the old woman, "and get them to bring a coffin the night, and take awa the corpse—the sooner it's gane the better."

"Jessie and me'll gang when we leave the house," said one of them; "but wha is to dress the bairn?"

The old woman looked towards the bed on which it was lying, and ejaculated a "Humph!" as if she thought it was needless trouble.

"There's naething right to put on't, that I ken o'," murmured another girl. "It's no dark yet. I'll hae time to cut up a sark o' my ain. It should be decent."

And with ready alacrity she rose and went to the inner room, whence she presently returned with the article of clothing

in question. It was the more generous of the girl to offer it, that none of her class in Blackfriars Wynd possess such an abundant wardrobe as makes it a matter of indifference to part with a portion of it. But a woman's heart was still beating warmly within her.

Another began to wash and do up a little cap belonging to the dead child, while Leezie looked on approvingly, smoking her pipe at intervals, and occasionally conversing with either as they proceeded with their work.

"Poor thing!" said one of the girls, in a low voice, and glancing compassionately on Nelly; "this has been very hard on her."

"She's a queer customer," said the old woman, in the same cautious tones;

“one would think she might be glad to be rid on’t. It’s been a heavy burden ever since she came here, as I ken to my cost.”

“But ye aye offered to keep it.”

“Did I no?” said the old hag, with her usual chuckle; “of course I did; but I had my ain ends to serve by that, hinny.”

The girl looked sharply at her.

“Ay, I guess what you mean,” she said, after a pause. “Ye kept the bairn to make sure the mother would come back—isna that it?”

Leezie nodded.

“Weel, you’ve lost that hold on her now.”

“Nae doubt,” replied Leezie, deliberately shaking the ashes from her pipe, and re-filling it with fresh tobacco; “but

she's accustomed to our ways now. Besides, hinny, where could she gang ? Catch ony o' your charitable leddies taking her in and providing for her—it's a' talk wi' the like o' them. And as to the Magdalene and the Shelter, I reckon she kens nought about them ; but even if she did, she'll no show her face at either. Na, na, hinny, she maun aye come back to the auld howff here in the hinder end."

" Weel," said the girl bitterly, " it's true enough what ye say—we maun a' come back. I tried hard at the first I ken to be allowed to live a decent life, but it's no easy wi' you and such as you. And wha besides would trust the poor street-walker ? When once we've begun this life, it's like the horse in the mill—we canna stop till death stops us. And the

warst of it a' is, that after a while we care na to live ony other way."

"What's come ower ye the night, dearie' that ye talk sae?" said Leezie, soothingly; "I never saw ye sae before."

The girl returned her no answer; she bit her lip, as if to restrain herself. There was a strange fire in her eye—a nervous quivering over her whole frame for some moments—and she darted one quick but stealthy glance at the old hag, that spoke a volume of intense hatred. The despair of the bereaved creature before her—though perhaps she herself had aided to make her what she was—had evidently struck some half-forgotten chord of feeling in her bosom. But it had scarcely vibrated when it died away; and she proceeded quietly with her work.

There was now silence for a considerable time in the room. It was at last broken by one of the women, who from the fire-place had been passive spectators of their companions' preparations.

"What a wark she has made about that bairn since the night ye brought her here," she said, as if the circumstance excited her wonder.

"She said it was a' she had left her," said another.

"Weel, for my pairt, I dinna wonder at it," murmured the girl who had formerly spoken, and who was now busily engaged with the little gown she had shaped ; "our hearts maun hae something to cling to at times, or they will break. Aince in a day I would hae been as ill as she is the now for the same cause, but it's lang,

lang since." And a deep sigh escaped her. There was a painful significance in it, and in her words. Her companions burst into a fit of laughter on hearing them, and in a few moments she laughed loudly herself, but it sounded unnatural, and might easily have been changed into sobbing.

The presence of death in the room did not solemnize its inmates. The little form lay rigid on the bed within the reach of more than one arm, and several times was the handkerchief raised, and common-place remarks made on the wasted appearance of the limbs. Such a sight had now no impression upon them; they saw more appalling ones every day. Their dreadful trade made them callous and indifferent to the ordinary losses and afflictions of life. An infant's

death—what was it in reality? They were more or less sorry for the mother, but most of them wondered to see her exhibit such grief for what they would have considered an oppressive burden.

And she—there she still sat in the first attitude, crouched in the furthest corner, stricken as if with God's heaviest judgment—a poor, crushed, despairing, bleeding thing. Another year, Nelly, of such companionship,—and you will feel as they do. Your heart will be seared too—you will then rejoice in what you are now mourning for—the hardening process has *already* begun. Ah! who can tell what thoughts are passing through that poor half-crazed brain as she sits there? perhaps they are not all of her child.

The dress and cap were at length finished, after many admonitions from old

Leezie to hurry. She had been obliged to light a candle to assist the girls in their work. It was getting late in the evening for them to be in-doors. Jessie, the one who had shown most sympathy, dressed the child, kissing its cold lips when she had done so, and looking approvingly on her handiwork. Then they all prepared to go in a body. But before leaving, one of them poured out a glass of spirits, and endeavoured to rouse Nelly to partake of it. It was the only thing that gave the girl herself comfort, and she thought it might afford the same to the sufferer.

Nelly at length raised her head, but she rejected the offer.

"I canna tak it," she feebly said, as the spirits was still pressed upon her. "I wish I could—but it only makes me mad."

And her head drooped again upon her arms.

In a few minutes wild laughter and wilder singing were ringing through the wynd. The girls were on their way to Princes Street.

CHAPTER VII.

ON the evening succeeding the one recorded in the last chapter, and on many previous ones, two figures—one, that of a grave and clerical-looking man; the other, that of a young female plainly and unobtrusively dressed—might have been observed traversing all the busiest thoroughfares both of the New and Old Town. They walked steadily and deliberately on, like people returning home from some evening engage-

ment. There were hundreds resembling them on the streets, and they attracted no attention.

And yet they had a great object in view. Threading those crowds so quietly and gently as to draw no curious eyes upon them, theirs—especially the female's—never for one moment ceased their scrutiny of the motley passengers. Her companion was careful to point out for her inspection individuals of the class in which she was interested, and to guide her safely along the pavement while her attention was engrossed by them. On they went on their mission of mercy; and no fatigue, no timidity—nay, more than these, no repeated disappointments had power enough to divert them from their purpose.

To a reflective mind, a walk along

the streets of any large town during the early portion of the night, is awfully suggestive. To the Christian and philanthropist, it is painful and harrowing—but to a virtuous female, what can equal its horrible revelations?

Ay, Mary Elliot, cling closer to your companion's arm—you may well do so! Those mild, innocent eyes of yours are strangely different in expression from those you have just encountered, and yet their owner belongs to your own sex. Shudder, Mary—well you may! Those pariahs have nothing of woman but the form. Trained to a life of vice from their cradles, they have not even the remembrance of virtue. You have seen them in their dens, Mary. Now they are here—and here you have met them every night you have searched

these streets. Nay—fear not that she you seek can have fallen into such total abandonment. They have never known another home than the thieves' haunt, or the brothel. They cannot look back, and say "I was once pure"—"I fell." They scarcely know that they have a soul—they scarcely know that there is a God—not one of them has been taught to read.

And there are churches in every street. And we send missionaries and Bibles (God be praised that we have hearts to do so!) to the distant heathen. Alas ! alas ! for the heathen in our wynds and closes !

Princes Street is busy, as usual, at this hour. Ay, Mary—turn away your eyes for a moment from that hurrying crowd,

and raise them to that solemn starry sky, and breathe a prayer for those you have just met! Prayers and exertions like yours, Mary, are precious. But unlike you, most of us content ourselves with expressing our horror and compassion at such sights, and then think no more of them.

How calm, how tranquil is that blue expanse—God seems looking through it! Those rows of glittering lights beneath, that beam from shop-window and hotel, and throw a ruddy glare on pavement and railing—how inferior, how earthly is their lustre! It is a solemn thing, Mary, with such a purpose, and such knowledge as you have lately acquired of this wicked, wicked world in your heart, to look up on these silent stars. They seem to be watch-

ing you, and to know your errand—God speed you on it!

This is the fourth night the pair have searched these streets in company. Mary's courage has gradually been increasing, as no insult has been offered to them. Though they have not met Nelly, she will not yet despair of doing so. It was easy to overlook her in the crowds; besides, she reflects that the girl by this time may be greatly changed. But it was sad to return every night to Danube Street, and her object not accomplished. Her mother too is agitated all the time of her absence, and sits counting the hours. And Martha also—Martha is greatly disturbed.

How painfully excited are both their minds when the well-known ring, late, late

at night, echoes through the silent house! How eagerly, and yet timorously, does Martha open the door, and examine those who are standing without. Only Mr. Duncan and her young mistress still—and her heart feels instantly relieved, and yet disappointed. And no one alludes to the subject that engrosses all their minds, but Mary shakes hands with her good friend, who takes his departure, and then she speaks cheerfully to wondering Martha, and enters. And then Martha goes quietly down to the kitchen, and seating herself by the hearth, gazes fixedly into the fire for a long time, wiping her eyes repeatedly. Grieve not Martha, that your young mistress should thus expose herself—God is teaching her a lesson!

It is within an hour of midnight, and they are retracing their steps along Princes Street,

after visiting the High Street and the bridge. The shops were closed long ago, and no light but that of the street-lamps now shines on the nearly deserted pavement. Those they meet might pass for gliding spectres, only their footsteps echo strangely loud on the stones. A few young men, returning from their evening engagements, hurry on singly—others, in groups, startle the silent street with the buzz of merriment and conversation. Mary fears to pass these groups—but yonder glimmers the watchman's lantern, and she is re-assured. Female figures flit here and there, and these she cautiously and anxiously approaches near, and examines by the lamp-light. Still disappointed.

The moon and stars gaze down watchfully on the hushed and dreamy town. There is a silver fringe on the motionless trees on

yonder bank, and a halo on castle and spire and pinnacle. Does not that grey shadowy figure, in the arched and graceful recess, look like the guardian midnight genius of the city, he, living, loved and sang of? And yonder are mountain and crag keeping their guard as of old, with the moonlight sleeping upon them, and a star or two twinkling on their brows.

Moon and stars, what look ye down upon, in this peaceful-seeming city? What broken hearts, what dim, despairing eyes are turned upwards towards your beams, hopeless of help, heedless it may be of life itself? What misery in human shape traverses these streets to-night? Can ye at least reveal to us the history, feelings, and purposes of that solitary, shadowy figure, that at this moment appears in view, trailing its weary, mechanical steps,

up yonder dim side street? See, it suddenly pauses, and leans as if to rest on the lamp-post, and looks steadily up! Is it in solemn admiration of your heaven-born radiance, or what thoughts are suggested by the gaze? it is a fixed and long one, and must have a meaning. Perhaps she thinks (for it is a woman) of a distant cottage, on whose humble roof those very beams are falling—whose inmates are slumbering peacefully, while she—oh! horror—must haunt the night, and vanish like a ghost before the light of honest day.

As she stands there a step approaches—a free, hasty footstep clanks on the stones, and she starts and looks hurriedly round. It is that of a young, and well-dressed man. He throws one careless, unrecognising glance on the girl as he passes her, crosses the street,

whistling as he goes, and mounting some steps, lets himself into his lodgings by means of his key.

Why did he not pause? why did not some avenging instinct whisper to him—there was his victim? She saw him—she knew him—but she could not accost him. 'Twas the first time they had met for many, many dreadful months; and her brain reels, and she gasps for breath, and she clings to the friendly lamp-post.

Ay, gaze up to those windows!—his heart is as closed to you as they are. He has altogether forgotten you, poor girl! No good in reminding him of your existence—you feel that in your heart, which is fast hardening into stone. It is pitiful—but those things happen every day. There he is, prosperous and secure—and you, *you* are on the streets.

Ay, turn away at length—go calmly and desperately on, and leave him to sleep in peace and undisturbed. But for the sake of God and your own undying soul, drive away those thoughts that intrude themselves so fast and boldly! You conquered them once—do it again! Resist that busy tempter who would fain persuade you that death is preferable to life. Ay, but not by your own hand! Be still, be still! God has not abandoned you, though man has. Help is near—the guardian angel is not far behind you.

On, fiercely, heedlessly, with clenched hands, flashing tearless eyes, heaving bosom, and wild gait. On, along the lonely midnight streets, where the sleepers dream not of the despairing vision pass-

ing beneath their windows. If they did it would banish slumber for that night at least, and make them trembling watchers till dawn reassured them. On, past homeward-bound stragglers who turn half in fear, half in wonder, to gaze on the strange flitting figure till it vanishes in the distance. On, in the calm still moonlight that mocks the strife and chaos within. On, to the churchyard where her baby lies, and where she too would willingly lie down and die.

They had told her where it had been laid, and she had visited it that morning, and had thought—poor Magdalene! that, after all, it was happier there. It seemed a quiet peaceful spot to her, that West Churchyard, with its old graves and monuments. It soothed her. The influ-

ence of the place had melted her even to weeping. She thought death sweet there. And as her eye rested on more than one holy text illustrative of the faith in which the sleepers beneath had lived and died, and her memory recurred to her long-disused Bible, she began to feel a trembling hope that perhaps that Saviour of whom they spoke might yet save even her—for had He not of old saved publicans and harlots?

She had gone back, as Leezie prophesied she should, to the old haunt—where else could she get admittance? but with the determination of yet making a struggle to redeem herself. Alas! poor girl, she little knew how many had resolved the same, and failed.

But the startling and unexpected sight

of her seducer had now wrought a revolution in her mind. It had hardened and maddened her. Her sufferings—the dreadful, degraded life she had been compelled to—all she had lost, were burnt in upon her brain by his sudden appearance. She grew reckless, desperate. She would have rushed upon destruction if it had lain in her path. But the churchyard and her child's grave seemed to invite her to come to them, and she hurried thither as to a refuge, for she had found them so that morning.

She reached the spot. The gate was locked. She had not considered that probability. Earnestly she gazed through the iron bars in search of the little dark newly-raised mound. It was confounded with a hundred others, on which the flickering

lights and shadows were playing. There was no admittance for her even into the churchyard, and bitterness came over her soul.

The fire and passion of her soul were now spent; her frame was too enfeebled to retain them long. She was now as quiet in appearance as before *he* had crossed her path—but her good resolutions were gone. How could she redeem herself? Where could she go? He was the same as ever—see her fate!

The low night wind stirred the churchyard grass, and shook the ivy that hung on the near tombs. They chilled her heart those sounds—made it feel cold, and stern, and unloving, as if they were rejecting, pitiless human voices. She felt herself hardly dealt with. The world

opened its doors to him, and she was shut out—she, the victim. She turned to go away—back to the wynd—she cared not whither.

A hand was laid on her arm, and a gentle, trembling voice said “Nelly.”

The girl looked wildly round. A recognition in that spot—at that hour of night—and by such a voice, was awful. It froze her blood. She shrunk back—but the hand was still on her arm, and she could not shake it off for dread.

Two figures are beside her—a man and woman, and all else is solitude—the watchman is far off. The three stand in the moonlight alone by the churchyard gate. The light falls on the girl’s startled and upraised face, which seems turned into stone by this sudden appeal. No marble could

have been whiter, and even more painful than its pallor was its expression of settled and rigid despair. How could those mournful, pitying eyes that are gazing fixedly upon her, have recognized her? They themselves are still doubtful, scarcely convinced that the wreck before them can be the person they seek.

“Nelly—Nelly Armstrong, is it you?”

“Oh! Miss Elliot, Miss Elliot!” and the girl is grovelling on the earth at her feet like a crushed worm. That is not the willing slave of vice. Shame and wretchedness, and self-loathing, are all in the attitude. Her face is hidden in her hands. In her humiliation at being seen thus by her former mistress, she would fly from her presence. But the gentle hand never lets go its hold. Tears of compassion are raining from Miss

Elliot's eyes as she stoops over her. Her companion stands so as to screen the pair from any passing eyes, and regards the girl with wondering pity. But he does not speak. Women deal best with women.

“ Rise, Nelly—rise and listen to me.”

She slowly and tremblingly obeys ; but the hands are not removed from the face, and she crouches into that shadowy corner between the wall and gate, as if to conceal her degradation as much as possible from sight.

“ Oh ! Nelly, do not shrink thus from me,” said Miss Elliot, afraid that she might escape from her. “ Oh ! Nelly, night after night have this good gentleman and I walked along these streets in search of you.”

The girl looked up at her wildly and doubtfully. It was a strange thing to believe.

"I thought nobody cared for such as me," she murmured at length.

"Oh! you are mistaken, Nelly," said Miss Elliot earnestly; "and could you think you were forgotten in your home?"

"My home, my home—Oh! Miss Elliot, Miss Elliot, the thought of it makes me mad sometimes. Tell me—but no, I couldna bear to hear it."

And she was again on the ground prostrate in her agony.

It is fearful to look on the struggles of an agonized human spirit. Miss Elliot was shocked and alarmed by the violence of the girl's emotion. It shook her whole frame, and her moans and sobs were most distressing to hear. Mary tried to calm her; and the good missionary, who read in her

forlorn and distracted appearance, not the hardened and determined transgressor, but one who had evidently been more "sinned against than sinning," came also to her aid. But it was minutes before they succeeded. Fortunately they were unobserved.

"You will accompany me home, Nelly," said Miss Elliot, when the girl was tolerably calmed, beginning to feel uneasy at the delay in such an open spot.

"Home with you, Miss Elliot!—how could I ever gang home with you?" she said, shrinking back.

"Why not, Nelly? my mother is willing to receive you. Oh! Nelly, surely you do not willingly lead this dreadful life—you have not chosen it, Nelly?"

“I have been driven to it, Miss Elliot—both God and man had forsaken me,” said the girl, with an air of sincerity that carried conviction to their minds. “But how could I show my face now among decent and respectable people—they would drive me frae them. I mind what I thought of such as mysell once. Let me perish as I am, and be forgotten by everybody!”

“Nelly, Nelly,” said Mary, distressed at an obstacle she had not anticipated at the commencement of the interview, “would you weigh the opinions and treatment of men in the same scale with your immortal soul?”

“I dinna ken, Miss Elliot—whiles I feel now as if God had given me ower, and if sae, it’s nae use facing the taunts of the

world for naething. Oh! ye canna understand what I hae felt and thought this very night, since I saw the man that brought me to this, walking along the streets the same as ever, while I am an outcast on the face o' the earth, with a brand like Cain's on my forehead. Why is he there, and me here?" And she looked strangely sullen and obdurate as she spoke.

"We have all sinned against God, Nelly, and all deserve His condemnation; but He forsakes none, unless they willingly forsake Him. Has He never spoken to your heart, Nelly, since you commenced to lead this profligate life? I am sure He has not let you alone."

The girl glanced hastily round on the churchyard as Miss Elliot solemnly put this

question. She remembered her feelings of that morning, the good resolutions that had been paramount in her breast, as she sat in the shadow of those brown church walls, with the dead lying around her, and appealing to her from their graves to remember that eternity on which they had entered. She was then away from man, and as it were face to face with God.

Had He crushed the repentant and sorely wounded spirit—had He bruised the broken reed? No; God had not abandoned her, as she had affirmed. He had been striving in her heart at that time, softening it, prompting her to break the bands of sin, and to return to Him. The iron hand partly relaxed its

pressure on her poor bosom—the face grew gentler.

The wind sighed again among the churchyard grass, and waved the ivy on the tombs. The sound was less mournful and chilling than before. It seemed to come from her baby's grave, and tears sprang into her dim eyes, as by association she thought of her own happy childhood and affectionate parents. How might her conduct have affected them? She feared to inquire. That small hand on her arm too, that would not relinquish its hold—had its owner really been searching the streets for her night after night—for her, lost, sunk, and delivered over, as she had thought, to infamy? Neither God nor man had forsaken her — Where was her plea?

“You will come with me Nelly?” again said Miss Elliot anxiously.

“I am thinking, Miss Elliot—Oh! let me think for a minute.”

There was a pause, a painful one to Mary Elliot.

“Tell me first, Miss Elliot—I mean it after a’—what about my father and mother?”

The girl’s eyes were rivetted on Miss Elliot’s face. She trembled to meet them, and to answer her. What might her feelings be when she knew all she had to tell! But she could not deceive her.

“Nelly, your father is gone!”

The pale face could be no paler; but that expression of horror, how ghastly it made it!

"Did—did I kill him?" she at length gasped out.

"No, my poor girl," said Mary Elliot, weeping, "it was an accident."

"But are you sure I didn't? had the news about me nothing to do with it? Oh! tell me—for the love of God tell me, Miss Elliot!"

The tone of wild entreaty admitted of no evasion. What could she say? She dared not utter a falsehood. She knew the Archers attributed the old man's death to his agitation of mind, on learning his daughter's disgrace and disappearance. She turned her head away, for she could not bear to look into the girl's eyes. There was a dreadful pause.

"I see how it is," said Nelly, with a

voice so altered that it did not seem her own; "and you can ask me, Miss Elliot, to return among decent folk—and above a' to face my mother," she added bitterly.

"Nelly, if you do not return to your mother, her heart will break."

"I hae broken it already, Miss Elliot—I ken that weel. How could I bear to meet her eyes and those of the folk at Winstraelea?"

And Nelly lifted up her voice and wept. Miss Elliot was in despair.

"Oh, Nelly!" she involuntarily exclaimed, "your mother can never look reproaches at you—she has lost her eyesight. Her heart too is yearning over you, and you will have her death to answer for if you do not return."

“ My mother blind—mair o’t still—oh, my mother, my poor mother !”

“ She knows I am seeking you, Nelly. Will you neglect your dying mother for fear of the scorn of your old companions ?”

“ Young woman,” said the missionary, who could refrain no longer, “surely you will yield?”

“ How can I ever speak to her—what can I say to her ?” sobbed Nelly.

There was a pause—then Mary Elliot’s sweet voice, a little agitated, broke the silence, repeating :

“ ‘ I will arise and go unto my father, and say unto him : Father I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.’ ”

It was later than usual that night when the long-expected bell rang through the

house. Martha had been compelled to ask permission to sit with Mrs. Elliot for the last hour—she could not bear to remain alone. Both were weary with watching and very anxious. Twelve o'clock was half an hour gone when they heard the bell. Both involuntarily started, looked at each other, and rose; but Mrs. Elliot resumed her seat, trembling with agitation.

Hastily, but as usual with a nervous hand, Martha undid the fastenings of the door, and looked out. There is another figure to-night crouching behind the others. She sees it indistinctly, but it is there, and her eyes are fascinated by it.

“Praise be to God!” said the missionary solemnly.

“We have found her, Martha,” whispered Mary.

A glimpse of a pale, changed face, with a look of trembling recognition, of humble entreaty in it, and the woman is melted into tears and steps out.

“Come in, poor thing,” she says, laying her strong hand on the wasted arm: “come in. God forbid we should be less merciful than Himself.”

CHAPTER VIII.

It was at the dusk that three persons quitted Mr. Archer's house, where two of them had arrived that day, and walked up the avenue. They proceeded silently—each was too anxious for conversation. Miss Archer and Mary Elliot and Nelly formed the group.

The ladies had been closeted with the latter all the afternoon, advising and latterly encouraging her. The latter they found

more and more necessary as the hour approached at which they deemed it most expedient to restore her to her parent. Nelly could not believe, tender as her mother had once been, that she could forgive all the disgrace and misery she had brought, not merely on herself, but on others. Her heart failed her. But she was perfectly submissive, and willing to do whatever the ladies desired. She was truly penitent they thought, and Miss Archer had listened with the deepest compassion to her story. Mary Elliot had heard it before. A less painful one would have drawn tears from Miss Archer—her kind heart was therefore horror-struck by Nelly's recital, unexaggerated as it was, and told in broken snatches, mingled with weeping.

They were doubtful of the best manner of breaking the news of her daughter's discovery to Mrs. Armstrong. Miss Archer did not feel composed enough to undertake it; she was sure she would abruptly reveal the whole truth, if she attempted it; so at last they resolved to take Nelly to the cottage in the evening, when the villagers would not recognise her, and leaving her for a few minutes at the door, endeavour, in the best way they could, to prepare the mother to receive her.

Poor Nelly Armstrong! Is that subdued spirit-broken-like creature, that timidly and submissively follows the two ladies towards her old home, the same that tripped along that avenue, night after night, in rosy health and happiness, at no such distant period? She cannot but think of that time—ay,

it is painful to her. The echo of her own merry laugh seems to ring in her ears under these trees, and from behind the garden hedges. She shrinks from her own old image; it is a poignant reproach to her. Her coquetry, her pride, her giddy wilful ways, her contempt for her equals—they all rise in judgment upon her. She has been convinced that it is her duty to return to her mother; but oh! how she dreads meeting any of the old faces, and reading scorn and contempt upon them.

It is dusk, but not dusk enough to satisfy Nelly, who feels as if every bush conceals a gazer, ready to start out with pointed finger and bitter taunt. And even if she escapes observation this night, there is the morrow before her, with its certain humiliations. Poor Nelly Armstrong!

They make a circuit, not to pass the village. Down the old familiar steps cut in the turf, to the banks of the stream—along its windings, till they reach the lane. They hear from a distance the murmur of the Row, but they do not see the houses. On this bank Nelly used to play, when a child, and string necklaces of gowans. Does she wish her childhood were returned? On, beneath the willows, that dip their silvery pendants in the clear cool water; through the hawthorn brake; across the dewy green where the villagers bleach their clothes, and where, in the early summer mornings, merry lasses, with trig “short gowns,” and “kilted coats,” may often be seen tramping the family blankets in tubs, and spreading them on the green bushes to dry—and up by the back of the old meeting-house.

The ladies are agitated, and converse in brief whispers; they wish the interview was over—Nelly that it was not to come. Her head is swimming; her limbs are trembling, and she can scarcely support herself. She pants for breath; she looks hurriedly on every side, as if meditating flight.

They have left the footpath, and entered the lane. It is the same up which her father accompanied her to meet the coach, up which her mother regretfully watched her progress. There is the old familiar cottage at the foot of it; and the last view she had of her mother was standing by its door, gazing wistfully after her.

Was that gaze prophetic, Nelly? Did your mother see trouble looming dimly in the distance, or did she know you better

than you knew yourself, and fear for you? Ah! that wilful spirit, that would have its own way, that resisted those anxious entreaties and reproachful looks, though they were those of a parent! Now the remembrance of these is a sword in your heart, Nelly Armstrong.

She feared your going—does any instinct now warn her of your approach? No—for Miss Archer, motioning to the others to pause, has anxiously stepped forward, and looked through the window.

The mother sits as usual by the fireside—she is alone in the cottage. Still in the old patient drooping attitude, the hands folded on the lap, the head bent as in mournful musing—quiet as a statue. There is no secret apprehension there that the lost one is found; but there is meek endurance,

sorrowful composure, in every line of the figure. More failed, Miss Archer thinks her, every day. Hope deferred is eating like a canker into her spirit, and the body is wearing away under it. She has set out on a journey from which there is no return.

She sits in the full light of a brisk coal fire, which leaps up and illuminates her care-worn face, as if to allow Miss Archer to peruse it. She is somewhat less tidily attired than of old; the blind eyes cannot discern her little attendant's blunders. Her room, too, is less clean and snug; but she knows nothing of it, and cares not to question about it: she is indifferent to all such things now.

Poor mourning mother! the footsteps for which you have so long watched are in the lane to-night. There is a weeping

figure there in the shadow of the wall that fears to enter your injured presence. Ah! she knows not how much a mother can forgive, or how you have wept and prayed, and listened for her return through the long night-watches of those weary, weary months. If she could read your heart, she would fly to your bosom and find refuge there.

They have glided up to the door and entered, and Nelly is once more within the threshold of her home. The father's coffin has passed over it since she trod it last. A deeper shadow even than that has crossed it, and rests on it still, and will for ever.

They have left her there, and entered the widow's room; the old valued friend, the young one who has wept for her sorrows, and is weeping now.

The trembling prodigal lingers by the outer door. Her heart beats so loudly that she fears her mother will hear its pulsations, and she presses her hand upon her side to still them. She trembles too, lest any of the neighbours may enter the house at present and discover her, and she hurriedly feels for the bolt—but suddenly takes away her hand, conscious that she has deprived herself of the right to draw it.

How strange, and yet how familiar every object around looks to her—the water-pitchers, which she has so often carried to the well, standing in their old nook—the tools with which her father used to work in his little garden in the evening—nay, the very passage itself, with the ancient rents and spots on its white-washed walls!

She notes everything—and yet her heart is sick, sick to death.

The fire-light streams into the little narrow lobby in which she stands, from the door of the room, which they have left open. One step forward and she would see her mother, but that step she dreads to take. She listens eagerly to catch the tones of her voice—and when she does, she starts so violently that the blind woman turns round and listens anxiously.

“How are you to-night, Mrs. Armstrong?” says poor, tender-hearted Miss Archer, whose very voice trembles with nervous emotion.

“Miss Archer—*you are not alone,*” was the mother’s answer.

In what a tone were the words uttered—no wonder the girl started!

“ I have brought my friend Miss Elliot to visit you; she arrived to-day from Edinburgh.”

“ From Edinburgh! then there is some news. Oh! ladies, tell me—tell me is my poor lassie found?”

Mary went up to her chair and took the thin, trembling hand in hers with reverence. Her tears fell on it as she pressed it.

“ Yes, she is found, Mrs. Armstrong,” she said distinctly.

“ Found!—found, did you say?—did I hear you right—you surely wouldna deceive me—did you say found?”

“ She is found, and she is in safety.”

"Oh! my God, my God, I thank Thee!"

There was a movement in the direction of the door, the faint echo of a sob that could not be repressed.

The mother heard it. She half rose in her chair—her lips apart—her head bent in the attitude of intense listening—her every nerve trembling with expectation.

A cry that thrills through each heart present, and the girl has darted from her place of concealment, and is clinging to her mother's neck.

"Oh! mother, mother, mother!"

"My Nelly! my Nelly! And have ye come back to me at last?"

"Oh! mother, mother!"

"Oh! the Lord be praised, the Lord be praised for all His mercies!"

“ Oh, mother ! — can you forgive me ? ”

“ As I trust the Lord will forgive me.”

CHAPTER IX.

THREE years have passed away. How solemn and impressive that expression, "passed away!" It sounds like a funeral knell.

Three years have passed away with all their hopes, fears, and happiness—not with their sorrows; these cast cold, lingering shadows behind, on the path of the present and future. The touch of happiness is light and evanescent, her fairy fingers leave little

trace, but grief and passion stamp their signet wherever they come. There is no effacing of their impress.

It is a lovely summer evening among the old woods of Craiglee, whose recesses are ringing with the cawing of the rooks, as they wheel in circles in the air, before descending to their nests in the centre of yonder grove of gigantic firs. The sunshine is "glinting bonnily" on Knochan and the heathy hills around him. Church and churchyard, and manse, are flooded with light; the one large-arched window of the little sanctuary glitters as if the interior were on fire. Here the river shines and sparkles, there it flows on dim and brown in the shadows of the hills; cottages and trees imprint their images on the slopes behind. Merrily the smoke ascends, from rustic

chimneys, warning the weary peasant that his evening meal is preparing ; and cows are crowding at gates, and lowing for the milk-maid.

Craiglee House commands this view of the little valley, and at this moment there is a group on the lawn quietly and admiringly contemplating it—with one exception, however. Yonder little rosy urchin, who is capering along the gravel sweep on grandpapa's stick, shouting to the crows overhead, has nothing of quietude about him, and he cares nothing as yet for fine views and picturesque effects. From one of the drawing-room windows Aunt Bess looks down on his gambols, which mightily resemble those of Lion's whelps in the back yard, and grand-mamma gazes admiringly over her shoulder.

The group on the grass consists of Mrs.

Elliot, her daughter, and son-in-law. They are conversing on the fair scene spread beneath; but the young mother's attention is often distracted from her companions' talk by the pranks of the child, and she occasionally exchanges a smile and a few words on the subject with the amused old ladies at the window.

These years have made little change on Mary Elliot's face, except, perhaps, to confirm the look of serenity and gentle earnestness which is its peculiar characteristic. It is pleasant, in this disappointing world, to read such a full content, such a quiet happiness as that face expresses. It has improved in beauty. The young matron, surrounded by numerous blessings, loved, and loving, is more interesting to the heart than in her maiden years. The beauty of a

calm, untroubled and trusting spirit, is shed like a halo around her whole person. Her husband looks worthy of her as she stands by his side, her arm linked lightly in his, and occasionally glances upwards into his face as he talks to her mother.

George Elliot may not be strictly handsome, but his figure is tall and manly, and his eyes and hair and teeth are excellent. He now and then meets his wife's glance, and the smile that he exchanges with her shows the perfect harmony and good understanding that exist between them.

Mrs. Elliot is little altered either. For the last two years she has occupied a house about half a mile distant. It was originally a farmhouse, but Mr. Elliot, having thrown two of his farms into one, it was left empty, and he offered to fit it up as a residence for her. Mrs. Elliot

joyfully accepted the offer, and soon became—unwillingly on his part, but she made it a condition in the agreement—his tenant.

It is a snug, pretty place, on the same side of the valley as Craiglee, which is the sheltered one, and just within an easy walk of the mansion house. Mrs. Elliot's health improved rapidly in her new residence. Its quietness and seclusion, the repose both of body and mind she enjoyed there, the gentle exercise she took in her garden, had a most beneficial effect upon her. The sight of her daughter's happiness left her nothing to wish for on earth, and she was now in a waiting attitude—her active work-time was over. Martha, and a young girl, formed her whole establishment at the Bush, where the days glided on peacefully and calmly, as became the latter ones of a ripening saint.

"Well, mamma," said Mary as the group began to move, "we will walk together to the little gate, and then I will leave you, and go down to the lodge. I want to give Nelly Miss Archer's kind message of this morning. And, George," addressing her husband, "when you have seen mamma home, will you come round by the lodge and walk back with me?"

Her husband engaged to do so.

"And Frank, little Frank," said his mother, catching the child in her arms, and interrupting his gambolling, "is not Frank coming with mamma to visit Nelly?"

"Frank will ride," said the young gentleman, with great alacrity, "Frank will ride to see Nelly."

"But what will poor grandpapa do without his stick, when he comes out to

walk with grandmamma? See, there she is, shaking her head at you from the window! Frank will be a good boy, and leave the stick; and perhaps papa will give him a nice ride home on his shoulder up the avenue if he does."

"Come along, my boy," said his father, snatching up the laughing child, and walking away with him on his shoulder; while Mary picking up the abandoned stick hastily committed it to Aunt Bess's guardianship, and then tripped gaily after the others.

It was a noble walk that avenue of Craiglee, with its great sweeping trees, sloping grassy bank, and the heathy, breezy mountain towering close above.

The sunshine is piercing between the great boles of trees, lighting up secret

nooks and recesses, and reposing lovingly on the grass. Streams of light strike down the centre of the woods, flickering on grey mossy stems, and gently waving boughs, and turning everything they illuminate into gold. Squirrels are darting up the trunks of trees, and the child joyously claps his little hands at sight of them; the blackbird and the mavis are chaunting their evening song.

Across the pretty rustic bridge, with its ivy-clad arch and parapets, underneath which the glistening water hurries and foams in mimic fury among fern-covered rocks and weather-worn boulders. On, beneath the grand cathedral arch of Nature's handiwork, through which the light falls stilly and solemnly on the path, as from

“storied windows” on a tessellated pavement. On, between banks blue with violets, hyacinths, and the creeping periwinkle. On, by rustic palings of unbarked pine, over which great oaks stretch their giant branches, and beeches bend their huge silvery stems, and lordly firs, rugged and majestic as their native mountains, rustle their dark funereal foliage. And so they reach the little gate constructed for Mrs. Elliot’s convenience, because it admits to a short and pleasant path that leads to the Bush.

Little Frank, not to his own satisfaction, is placed upon his feet, and affectionate good nights are exchanged by mother and daughter. Then Mrs. Elliot, accompanied by her son-in-law, moves

quietly homeward, while Mary leading and chatting to her little boy, pursues her further way down the avenue.

There is the white trim lodge in sight. A pretty lodge it is, with its clustering roses, honeysuckle porch, and smoothly shaven green in front. It, too, has its simple but tasteful paling of pine logs, rough as when they grew in the forest, surrounding its little lawn and separating it from the avenue.

Mary reaches the door, and enters with a light step. The interior is in keeping with the neatness and order out of doors. The lodge contains two apartments, a sitting-room and small sleeping-closet. It is into the former that the young mother advances, leading her child. A clean sanded floor, whitened walls, with a few prints

upon them, neat well-rubbed furniture, and a set of hanging shelves, containing some choice religious works, whose worn bindings of an ancient fashion show that they have been often referred to, present themselves to the visitor's eye. But all these objects are familiar to it.

It is a cheerful-looking airy room, with two lattice windows, one of which is at present open, and with a range of flower-pots in full bloom on the sill. In the other stands a small, round, old-fashioned table, supported by a single leg, as black and lustrous as ebony, with some needle-work lying upon it. A piece of carpeting is beneath the table, and on it reposes a very large and fine cat.

The gentle evening breeze, laden with the perfume of the honeysuckle flowers,

steals through the open casement into the room, and there is a soft murmur without of rustling boughs, rippling water, the buzzing of bees, and the singing of birds.

“You are busy at work, Nelly,” Mary says kindly, as the solitary inmate of the lodge, seated by the table, her head bent thoughtfully over her needle-work, does not seem aware of her presence.

A start, a sudden gleam of colour on the pale grave face, and the young woman instantly rises and places a chair for her lady. A look of pleasure welcomes the visitor. She then stands respectfully at a little distance. Nelly Armstrong, though in delicate health—“in a wasting” the people say—can never be prevailed on to sit in the lady’s presence. Little

Frank takes possession of the carpet and the cat, and is soon busy teasing the latter.

“ You are working too closely, Nelly, I fear,” said Mrs. George Elliot, looking anxiously on the stooping figure and sickly complexion of the young woman ; “ you must not do so—there is no hurry for those things. It is bad for the chest to bend so much. You must be more out of doors, and I will send Pattison down to-morrow forenoon with some jelly and arrow-root for you.”

“ You are far too good to me, Ma’am,” said Nelly, in faltering accents, and with tears in her eyes.

“ And here is little Frank,” continued Mary, speaking cheerfully, “ who has come to visit you to-night, and to say that

grandmamma hopes you are taking the wine the doctor ordered for you the other day. You remember grandmamma's message, Franky?"

"Grandmamma said—Frank forgot it now," said the little boy, whose whole attention was engrossed at present by his new plaything.

A sweet but very evanescent smile lighted the young woman's face as she looked on the beautiful boy and then on his mother.

"I am much obliged to Mrs. Elliot, Ma'am," she answered; "I am taking the wine. But do not let the mistress send me any more, for I do not require it."

"Well, the doctor will decide about that, Nelly. But I have come to-night to

tell you that I have had a letter from good Miss Archer, who is grieved to hear you are poorly, and asks me to give you her best wishes."

Nelly dropped a grateful curtsey, and again her face coloured with emotion.

"I do not deserve that she or any one should care about me, Ma'am," she said. "My mercies are very great."

"You will also be happy to hear, Nelly, that she has promised to visit us shortly."

"Has she indeed, Ma'am? Oh, how glad I will be to see her kind face once more! It was a blessed face to me during that year my poor mother lived. But for her, I could not have stayed at Winstraelea, and would not now have the comfort of thinking that I nursed my mother in her

long weakness. Oh, Ma'am! what would have become of me, but for you and her! I would either have perished by my own hand, or—"

She paused and shuddered violently.

"Hush, Nelly!" said her young mistress gently, and with tears in her eyes; "do not speak of those days—they agitate you."

"It does me good, Mrs. Elliot—it does me good! When I think of those poor creatures who were my companions, and who are probably still leading the same life, if they have not ere this gone to their account, what cause have I to adore the wonderful mercy of God, who put it into your heart to save me from perdition! I have been snatched as a brand from the burning, and they who had not the example

set before them that I had, are left behind. Well may I be humbled! Oh, if I could but meet those girls again, or could do anything to save them!"

"I fear, Nelly, it would be impossible," said Mary, sadly.

"So, Ma'am, I have been thinking as I have been sitting at my work this evening. And yet, though one individual could do little, much might be done by numbers of the rich and charitable. Ladies should be warned of the temptations to which their servants are exposed. They have it in their power to prevent these. Many a girl is first led astray by having a careless easy mistress, who never inquires who visits her servants, or where they go when they are out."

"I fear it is too true, Nelly. Nelly, I wish you would sit down."

“ I am quite comfortable, Ma’am, thank you. I do not know, Ma’am, whether I ought to talk so often of these things to you. I am afraid I should not ; but I cannot help thinking constantly of them myself, and when the heart is full of anything, the lips will be speaking of it.”

“ It is a painful subject, Nelly ; but we cannot think or pray too much about it.”

“ Oh, Ma’am ! it is dreadful in a Christian country that people should be willing to forsake a wicked life, and yet be unable to do so. And those who should be the readiest to help, are the most backward. Ladies will never trust a girl who has been on the streets. It is this that makes one desperate.”

“ It is very true, Nelly, and more should be done. If after a certain time of pro-

bation these girls were enabled to commence life anew, I often think they would become respectable members of society."

"I know they would, Ma'am—some of them. If they were but sent abroad where their story was not known."

"Talking of that, Nelly," said Mrs. Elliot, anxious to change the subject, "have you heard from your brother since he reached Australia?"

"I had a letter about a month ago, Ma'am. I have wished again and again to speak about it to you, Ma'am, but did not like. Poor Jamie has offered again to receive me if I choose to go out to him."

"And have you answered his letter, Nelly?"

"No, Ma'am, not yet. The truth is, I

am unwilling to go, for several reasons ; and yet I am unwilling," she added after a pause, "to remain here, for fear I may become a burden and a care to you."

"You are no burden to us as yet, Nelly—you fully earn your livelihood—and the future is of God's appointment. Remain where you are. You are unfit for a long sea voyage, and for the hardships you would endure ere you reached your brother. I hope he writes kindly to you."

"He tries to do it, Ma'am," said the young woman, with a quivering lip ; "but poor Jamie cannot forget—and no wonder—the curse I have proved to all belonging to me."

Poor Nelly ! her remorse for her old errors was great—so great as to have affected her health. Its intensity was

almost morbid. She felt herself the greatest of sinners; for she had sinned, she often said to Mrs. Elliot, against light and knowledge.

Bitter, bitter had been the ordeal she had had to go through during the year succeeding her recovery. But for Miss Archer's kindness and encouragement, she could not have endured its humiliations. When her mother died, her friends at Craiglee considerably offered her an asylum with them, and there she had been for two years. Her consistent conduct and humility during that period had fully convinced her protectors of her genuine repentance. Except themselves and Martha, who showed much kindness to the poor spirit-broken girl, no one in the neighbourhood of Craiglee

knew her story, and she was universally respected; though many wondered that so young a woman should live so secluded a life, and have so thoughtful and subdued an aspect. But her indifferent health so far accounted for it.

Still, though Nelly's face seldom wore any but a sad expression, she was seldom positively unhappy. God, she believed, had forgiven her, and "the peace which passeth all understanding" was often hers. But her heart yearned over the wretched Magdalenes she once had known; and as she sat all alone in her little lodge, her thoughts were constantly occupied with them. But she was a poor helpless woman; and all she could give them was her prayers.

"I feel, Ma'am, that I have not long

to live," Nelly resumed, after a pause ;
"and I would ask one favour of you in addition to those many which you have already done for me. It is, Ma'am, that when I am gone, you will write to my brother, and tell him—I never could speak to him on the subject—that though my own sins brought me there, I was not willingly on those awful streets where you found me. It would be a comfort to me to know that he will hear this—and maybe he will think less ill of me when he does. Ask him," she continued, her voice faltering, and pressing her hand on her bosom as she spoke, "ask him to try and think of me, if not kindly—for perhaps he canna do that—at least with forgiveness, for the sake of that Saviour who did not reject even Mary Magdalene."



Mary gazed anxiously on the pale face and wasted figure of the young woman as she thus addressed her, and for the first time a conviction darted into her mind that her days were indeed numbered. She had thought Nelly looking very ill for some time, but she had never been seriously apprehensive about her, and had expected that nourishing food and gentle exercise would soon restore her.

Shocked and distressed by the unexpected announcement the girl had just made, she rose from her seat and laid her trembling hand upon Nelly's arm.

"Nelly, are you really so very ill?" she anxiously asked.

"Do not let that distress you, Mrs. Elliot—what am I that I should give distress to you, or anybody?" said Nelly,

gratefully. "And, oh! Ma'am, if it's God's will, I would rather be awa."

Mary, with her hand on Nelly's arm, still continued for some moments to gaze on her, tears rising into her own eyes as she did so—then she gently forced her to sit down in a chair, and hastily wiping away her tears, she seated herself quietly beside her.

What after all was there to grieve at—at least, on Nelly's own account? There was nothing to bind her to the earth—and she herself wished to go. But Mary felt she would miss her—that Nelly would leave a vacuum behind her.

The almost daily walk to the lodge, and the conversation with its humble inmate, had been very pleasant—even profitable to her. Ay—profitable! for that

poor, despised ruined girl had, during two years, made rapid progress in spiritual learning, and had now become Mary's teacher. She always returned from a visit to Nelly with the feeling that she had been breathing a purer and higher atmosphere.

"And you are willing then to leave us, Nelly?" said Mary, at length.

"Not willing to leave you, Mrs. Elliot, but glad to be with the Lord."

"If such are your feelings, Nelly, you are indeed rather to be envied than pitied," said Mrs. Elliot. "Would that I could say the same—but the world cleaves closer than ever to my heart, I think," she tearfully added, while her eye rested wistfully on her little boy playing on the carpet.

"Not the world, dear lady," said the

young woman, gently, her eye taking the same direction, "but that the Lord has given you duties and a work to do for Him here below, and has bestowed upon you warm affections and a loving heart to enable you to perform them. But as for me," she continued, "I am of no use here, unless to serve as a beacon and warning to others; and the Lord knows this, and in mercy is going to take me to Himself."

"Perhaps, after all, you are mistaken, Nelly, and your time is not so near," said her young mistress, again earnestly scrutinizing her appearance.

Nelly shook her head: her conviction was not thus to be shaken.

"The doctor called last night at the Lodge, on his way to the Windygate Farm,

Ma'am," she answered ; "and he says I am right."

"Did you ask him, Nelly?"

"I did, Ma'am, though he could not tell me more than I was already persuaded of—and he tells me I am right."

"He does—he does. And what did he say?"

"He told me, Ma'am, he feared I was in a rapid decline, and that I would probably not live over the fall of the leaf. He seemed at first to be unwilling to satisfy me; but when I pressed it earnestly upon him, and assured him that I myself was quite aware of my state, he spoke plainly out; and I assure you, Ma'am, I have felt far more comfortable since my mind was settled upon the subject. My mother, Ma'am, was come of a consumptive family,

and it's like that I take after her side of the house."

The composure and serenity with which all this was uttered were striking. Nay, sometimes the girl smiled while she spoke, as if the thoughts the subject suggested were pleasant to dwell upon. Mary Elliot wondered at her.

"Nelly, you must not be left alone after this. I must send you a nurse," she said, after sitting thoughtfully for some moments.

Nelly looked suddenly distressed.

"Oh no, Ma'am—no, Mrs. Elliot," she said, with much earnestness; "it is like your usual kindness. But, oh, Ma'am," glancing round her room, "solitude is *so* sweet."

"But, Nelly, I should be miserable if no one was with you, after what you have

told me. You will surely allow Martha to come, if she is willing, and my mother can spare her.”

Nelly hesitated still, but tears of gratitude overflowed her eyes.

“ You are very, very kind and considerate, Ma’am,” she said, with a tremulous voice. “ And Martha—yes, I believe Martha would come. But any turn I have to do, Ma’am, is very light, and—and I would rather be alone for a little while yet. I will be thankful to have her when the needful time comes.”

And Mary, observing how earnest she was, did not urge the point further, secretly determining, however, that Nelly should be oftener visited than formerly, and that every care should be taken to lighten the duties which devolved upon her—though these,

as she herself had said, were far from heavy.

“And you are perfectly happy in this prospect, Nelly. Have you never felt your mind overclouded?”

“Yes, Ma’am, some time ago it was. When I first began to suspect what it was that ailed me, I fell into great darkness and distress. I thought that I had been deceiving myself, and that God had not really forgiven me, as I had been trusting. My sins seemed to rise just like mountains before me, and I felt terrified and overwhelmed at the sight of them, and at the thought of death. Something seemed always whispering to me that my sins placed me beyond the pale of salvation, and that, though there might be mercy for others, there was none for

such a sinner as I had been. Oh, Ma'am, that time was awful. But the light broke through at last," she continued, clasping her hands earnestly together, "and then I saw that I had been looking into myself for something to recommend me to God, and no wonder therefore that I was in despair. I was brought to see that no merit of mine could entitle me to salvation, and that I must be content to owe everything to the mercy and free grace of God. And ever since then, Ma'am, I have been resting on the Saviour as calmly and sweetly as the baby that sleeps on his mother's bosom."

"And you have overcome the fear of death, Nelly?"

"God will be with me in the dark valley, Mrs. Elliot," said Nelly, raising her beaming

eyes to heaven. "He hath said it Himself in the Scriptures of truth."

They had some further conversation together, which it is unnecessary we should repeat. Nelly was perfectly calm and tranquil, and Mary became so likewise while listening to her.

"I will do all you wish me, Nelly," she said in conclusion, for the young woman had ventured to make some further humble requests—one of which was, that either Mr. Elliot, or his son—if they would condescend so far—would lay her head in the grave.

"I wouldna wish a stone to be put upon it," said Nelly, "or anything that would remind people of such a poor wretch as me—unless it was to serve as a warning to them—God will ken it weel enough on the resurrection morning."

The opening of the wicket, and the appearance of her husband at the door, warned Mary to break off this painfully interesting conversation.

"Good evening, Nelly," said the young man, kindly. "I hope you feel better to-night."

She answered with a respectful curtsey.

They bade her good-night, and left the lodge. Nelly quietly followed them to the door, and gazed earnestly after them as they slowly walked up the avenue. The young wife was leaning sadly on her husband's arm, who was bending down and listening attentively to something she was telling him. The little boy was holding by his mother's hand. Twilight was beginning to fall, and a sweet calm seemed diffused over mountain and woodland.

On they went in the shade of their own trees—happy, welcoming faces ready to greet them when they reached their home—a grateful heart to pray for them left behind.

“God bless them and theirs!” murmured Nelly, as she withdrew at length into the lodge.

* * * *

CONCLUSION.

It was on a cold October evening, somewhat less than three months after the conversation we have related, that Mrs. George Elliot received a hasty summons from Martha to repair to the lodge—and Mary knew that the messenger of death had at length arrived. She had been expecting him for some days. Hastily wrapping herself in a warm cloak, and declining all attendance, she hurried down the darkening avenue to the lodge.

It was a lonely and solemn walk at this hour of evening, and Mary's mind was filled with solemn thoughts. The season was suggestive of melancholy. Emblems of decay and death were all around her. Showers of withered leaves came fluttering down from the trees as she passed beneath their arching boughs, and a low moaning wind was whistling drearily and mournfully through the dark woods. The little river, invisible at this grey hour in the rocky chasm through which it rushed, reminded her forcibly of that mysterious human soul which was rapidly gliding along the stream of Time, and about to enter on the wide and unfathomed ocean of Eternity. Ay, but not alone; not forsaken—there is a pilot to guide it there.

Yes, Mary, wipe away those slowly trick-

ling tears as you think of this, and look steadily up! The shores to which Nelly is hastening are not unknown nor unexplored—through the mist that veils and obscures them from mortal gaze, the eye of faith can penetrate so as to obtain glimpses of their mysterious and inexpressible glories. That Pisgah view—how often hath it cheered and consoled the fainting and bereaved soul!

Now she is musing on the past—on her first acquaintance with Nelly—and on all the strange providences that have marked their intercourse. Yes, Mary, rejoice—be thankful! for you have been made the favoured instrument of saving an immortal soul. What are all the gratifications of the world when compared with this! At this moment, how poor, how insignificant do they appear to her!

A light appears twinkling from the window of the little lodge, and she hastens towards it, hoping that she may not have arrived too late.

With a light and solemn step Mary Elliot enters the room where the dying girl is lying. They had removed her some weeks previously into the larger apartment of the lodge. A group, consisting of Mr. Balderstone the clergyman, a good old woman from the village, and Martha, is standing around the bed. Mary silently takes her place among them, and gazes earnestly upon Nelly.

She seemed asleep. Her eyes were closed, and her chest was heaving with the slow and laboured respirations of approaching dissolution. The struggle (if any there had been) was over, and life was calmly and gradually ebbing away.

A solemn silence reigned for some time in the cottage—the ticking of the clock was the only sound that broke it. Martha and the old woman were in tears; but Mary could not now weep—she felt that there was no sting in that death that lay before her—that it had been taken away.

“Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” rose to her lips, and diffused a sweet calm over her soul.

They thought that Nelly would pass away without wakening from the slumber into which she had fallen. But suddenly she opened her eyes, and dim and glazed as they were growing, she saw and recognised her beloved young mistress.

A heavenly smile irradiated her counte-

nance, and she made a feeble attempt to stretch her hand towards her.

“You are happy, Nelly?” said Mary, tenderly bending over her and pressing her hand.

“Happy—happy!” she feebly murmured.

“You have no fear?”

“Christ is with me,” said the dying young woman.

There was again a silence for some moments—Nelly seemed sinking again into unconsciousness.

“Have you nothing further to say to me, Nelly?” said her mistress, anxious once more to hear her voice.

Nelly roused herself again.

“I will leave you a Scripture, dear lady,” she said: “I have marked it in my Bible which Martha is to give you.”

“‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’”

The voice that uttered the words was nearly inarticulate, but yet Mary caught their meaning, and she was overpowered. She bent her head on the side of the bed for some moments. Suddenly there was a movement among those around her, and she looked hastily up. The spirit had departed in the interval; the soul had returned to God who gave it.

THE END.

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